FRANCE & ENGLAND;

OR,

SCENES IN EACH.

COMPILED FROM THE ORIGINAL PAPERS,

BY

EDWARD CASTLETON GIFFARD, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

"Here's much to do with Love, but more with Hate."
SHAKESPEAR.

"When Jove in anger strikes the blow,
"Oft with the bad the righteous bleed.
"Yet with sure steps, though lame and slow,
"Vengeance o'ertakes the trembling villain's speed."
FRANCIS' HORACE.

VOL. I.

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THE EDITOR'S PREFACE.

In giving to the world the following pages, I obey the solemn injunctions of him, who makes in them the most conspicuous figure. But before entering upon the immediate history of my friend, it becomes necessary to account for that history having been so long delayed in its publication, and likewise my own introduction to, and knowledge of, its principal character. This delay has been caused by delicacy towards some, and compassion towards others, who were considerably implicated in the singular adventures of my friend, and who, though mentioned (as well as the hero of the tale) under fictitious names, would yet necessarily have recognized events, in which they bore a conspicuous part, and which could not

have been recalled without many a pang of conscience, or the softer and more enviable feelings of sorrow. Of those, who were likely to be thus affected, the greater part are now no more; and though some collateral branches of such families yet remain in the country, where those cruel events passed, they were themselves innocent of any share in such transactions. More than twenty years have passed since the grave closed over the most injured and unhappy of men; and inclosed in its cold precincts a heart and character little known, though universally and most erroneously judged,—a heart more allied to Heaven than to earth.

In relating the circumstances, which occasioned and attended my introduction to Sir Castleton Montreville, (under which appellation I veil his real one) I shall endeavour as much as possible to avoid egotism. To this end I pass over the events of the first seventeen years of my own life, and shall merely observe that my mother was early left a widow in circumstances far from affluent, with me, her only child, to educate. Were I to personify perfection, I

should choose the image of this incomparable mother, who, careless of all selfish considerations, gave up every luxury, and but too many comforts, to bless her son with the best education his own country could bestow. Beatified Saint! That grateful son eternally worships thy memory!

My mother was distantly related to Sir Castleton Montreville, and had in early life been much in his society, and one of his greatest favorites. He was abroad when distress first assailed my mother, or to him she would have applied, secure of relief. On his return to England he was wrapped in mystery and gloom, and utterly inaccessible to every one but two very old and attached domestics. Indeed, he appeared to have suffered even their services more from necessity than desire. I had passed my seventeenth year when a dangerous illness attacked me, and obliged me to retire from Eton to my home some weeks previous to the vacation. I was recovering from this malady, when my mother received a letter from Mrs. Marriot, the old house-keeper of Sir Castleton Montreville, requesting that

she would immediately repair to Castleton Manor, at the particular request of the Baronet, who was seized with an illness he himself apprehended would be fatal. My mother could not hesitate to comply with his wishes, but my own weak state embarrassed her, equally unwilling to obtrude me upon Sir Castleton, or leave me to servants at home. The situation of the Baronet, however, and the size of his house, she knew would enable her to conceal me from him and she determined that I should accompany her. I was highly delighted, for I attached to the very air of Sir Castleton's domains the idea of mystery, singularity, and discovery. We arrived late at the Manor, and my mother had some difficulty in persuading the old house-keeper that no mischief would follow my introduction at that place. I promised, however, to ask no impertinent questions, make no remarks, and never to go too near Sir Castleton's apartments. My mother, having committed me to the hospitable care of Mrs. Marriot, went herself to the chamber of the invalid, where I found she was very favorably received. A-

for me, though I had promised neither to ask questions nor make remarks, imagination was very busy, and never was a place better calculated to inspire the ideas of mystery and romance. Gloom and silence pervaded alike every avenue of this immense and cheerless fabric. The furniture, old, heavy, and magnificent, was dropping to decay. The greater part of the windows were blocked up; and, as if determined to make the place as desolate as possible, only the north side of the building was inhabited. The great court was overgrown with rank long grass and weeds, the plantations neglected, the gravel covered with moss. The autumnal season was far advanced, and the equinoctial blasts sounded more hollow through the long dreary passages, and dilapidated halls. At the end of a week, I had regained considerable strength of body through the excellent nursing of Mrs. Marriot, and my mind became proportionably active, and tired of the dull sameness of my present abode. My mother passed almost all her time in Sir Castleton's apartments, and though I was for some days amused by ex-

ploring the deserted part of the building, I grew weary of my solitary rambles. At the expiration of this time, however, my situation was greatly amended. My mother, to whom every species of concealment was unpleasant, and who found her presence too agreeable to be spared at present, informed him of the liberty she had taken in bringing me there, and her reasons for so doing. Sir Castleton Montreville lamented, in terms equally polite and friendly, the dull manner in which his ignorance of my being there had compelled me to spend my time; apologized for not admitting me to his apartments, and ordered his game-keeper to furnish me with every requisite for shooting in any part of his abundant preserves, or to promote, in any other way more agreeable to me, my pleasures. I was now perfectly contented, for shooting was my passion. Mrs. Marriot too, no longer dreading discovery of my vicinity, studied to contribute to my amusement, when the weather prevented my seeking it abroad. She remarked that I was really a very pretty behaved young gentleman, with a great deal of civi-

lity and very little curiosity; and that to reward such singular goodness, she would herself shew me some apartments, which she alone ever entered. I readily accepted her offered kindness, and followed her one dreary morning to these secret haunts. From the general style of the house and decorations, I had prepared myself for something more than commonly dismal—some romantic tale of ghosts and murder, and floors marked by indelible streams of blood. Judge then my surprise, when I entered (after the old lady had removed the shutters so that I could see) a large drawing-room elegantly fitted up with pale blue silk and silver ornaments, the furniture of which was in every respect answerable. This room opened into a conservatory, where a beautiful vine yet flourished, though the glass and frame-work of the building were broken and decayed, and the plants, which once adorned it, no longer there. From this room I passed to a small, but elegant library. The books were ranged in perfect order, and superb gilded cases; and were evidently adapted to female taste. The best poets, and the best historians, in

English, Italian, and French, were collected here: delicate statues in Parian marble held vases for flowers and perfumes, and every article of furniture pronounced this lovely place appropriated to female elegance. Above the fire-place hung a portrait, representing a young man in a shooting-dress, holding in his hand an open letter. The animating effects of that letter sparkled in the large dark eyes, and smiled in the exquisitely beautiful mouth of the youth, whose whole figure seemed radiant with hope and joy. I turned to Mrs. Marriot—tears filled her eyes—"It is Sir Castleton's picture, Mr. Giffard," said she to my silent appeal. "Such was my master eighteen years ago. Nobody would think it now! That letter was from Miss Julia, poor Miss Julia! Don't ask me any questions, Mr. Giffard, I pray," she added, reading my intention in my eager looks. I checked a curiosity sufficiently painful; and having examined in silence a bed-room and boudoir of equal elegance, retired to meditate and wonder. Mrs. Marriot carefully restored the various wrappers which had so

well preserved the beauty of these apartments, drew the thick curtain of green cloth over the portrait, and remained incorrigibly silent on the subject. After staying nearly a month at the manor, Sir Castleton recovered sufficiently to return to his usual occupations, whatever they might be, and my mother and I quitted Derbyshire. I found my mother's spirits considerably improved by some very flattering promises Sir Castleton had made respecting my future welfare. He had desired her to discover the bent of my inclinations, in order that he might best assist me to act accordingly. I had always turned my wishes towards the Church, but conscious of my mother's inability to support me at College in the style my family had heretofore appeared in, or indeed with common comfort to her and myself too, I had hitherto checked the wish, and, with many a silent sigh, turned my unwilling eyes towards a merchant's house, where my mother had an uncle advantageously situated, who had offered to admit me into it. Sir Castleton's

generosity changed my views, and I frankly owned my wishes. He advanced two thousand pounds immediately as a part of an intended legacy, and I entered my name at Trinity College, Cambridge. There I passed three years with pleasure, and I hope with profit. At the end of that time my mother received a second summons to Castleton Manor, not as a nurse but a friend; and to my great satisfaction I was invited to accompany her, and admitted to the presence of the singular owner of the mansion. It is not now my intention to make any farther remark on this visit than to observe that it was my good fortune, with the assistance of my friend the gamekeeper, to render an important service to Sir Castleton, a few weeks after my arrival at the Manor, which was the means of my becoming from that time a constant inmate of his house, during the short remainder of his life. That life I was fortunate enough to assist in preserving. But the circumstances will be found at large in the conclusion of these memoirs, and I shall not

further observe upon them at present, than merely to state, that their consequences were such as to make an entire alteration in my present habits, and my future prospects; and that, quitting College, I gave myself up wholly to the service, and I believe comfort, of my friend and benefactor.

It was not till some few weeks previous to his decease that he made the request, and reposed in me the entire confidence, which led to the publication of the following pages. I had several times remarked him very busily employed at his *secretaire*, surrounded by papers, and at those hours more gloomily melancholy than at others. He frequently looked at me with an earnest expression, as if wishing to make a communication, which yet he shrank from. I ventured, at length, to offer my assistance in arranging this multiplicity of papers. As if relieved by the offer, he instantly accepted it, and at once entered upon the interesting detail of his life.

"But I know not why I should pain my-

self by retracing these events," said he, suddenly interrupting himself, "you will find them all recorded in these pages, (pointing to the heap of papers strewed around) and if I do not tax too highly a friendship, to which I am already so deeply indebted, I wish you, after my death, to arrange them in the form of a narrative. After the decease of some too, whom I will not expose, whatever may have been their conduct towards me, I would have these particulars published. My character has been greatly aspersed, and totally misunderstood. There is, in the breast of every man, a desire of posthumous fame, and I own that I should die more satisfied, if I thought I might yet live in the memory of the good, as I believe that I deserve. I did intend to have arranged all these papers, which contain every transaction of my unfortunate life, from the age of three and twenty, when I bade adieu to peace. I am not now, though thus bowed and broken with care and sorrow, fifty years old. I find the task of being my own

historian, however, too painful, and would fain delegate to you the friendly but troublesome office."

My answer satisfied him, and whenever I could leave him, I busied myself in this employment. Alas! His death too soon left me at perfect liberty to attend wholly to my task. I have been obliged to bestow much labour in arranging and methodizing events, and in rendering the language more modern and more equal than he had done, written as his multiplied sheets were at various times, and under contradictory feelings. Many of my materials were contained in letters to and from the principal actors; and I have sometimes retained those originals, where I thought they assisted the history, or more eloquently spoke the writers' sentiments. I believe no one now exists, who could suffer a pang from the unworthiness of those connected with them. I would not willingly give pain to any one, or make one *honest* man my foe.

I venture now diffidently to offer my labours to an indulgent public, who, I

trust, will pardon the errors of composition in one unused to the task; and who, if to *them* the incidents now related should prove uninteresting, will kindly call to mind that a sacred duty alone impelled *me* to publish them.

G. C. GIFFARD.

London, March 5, 1814.

CHAPTER I.

The family of Montreville was of considerable respectability, having originated with the return of our second Charles, in whose restoration they were active and faithful assistants. The founder of this illustrious house had followed the adverse fortunes of his prince, with uncomplaining assiduity—had accompanied him in exile, and cheerfully shared his dangers; and he was rewarded for his fidelity, upon the fortunate change in the affairs of his master, by being the first baronet created by the royal hand of that gay and graceless monarch. A handsome estate was also given as a support to this dignity, and a post of honor and emolument near the person of the sovereign, whom he had loved, honored, and served. The title, together with the name of *Charles*, descended with unblemished honor and increasing prosperity from generation to generation; nor were the circum-

stances forgotten, from which these dignities arose. The long story of the king's escapes, his sufferings, and the share Sir Gilbert (for unfortunately they could not give *him* the august name of Charles) had in all that concerned him, was handed down to posterity, and considered nearly as sacred as the holy writ; and though it confined the elevation of the Montrevilles to dates and certainties, when they would willingly have traced its origin to Noah, the circumstances, in which their great ancestor stood, were so glorious, so luminous, that they threw on their posterity a gleam of radiance, fully equal to a more extended line. For the elder son of this illustrious house to marry young—to have in proper time a son in his turn, bearing the name of Charles, and inheriting the greatness and the prejudices which he would himself hereafter transmit, were events of settled and regular occurrence. From the birth of a boy to his twenty-first year, the great object of every branch, near and collateral, of this flourishing tree, was to provide him a proper wife. The lady was generally chosen,

not for so perishable a possession as beauty, but the more solid accomplishments of fortune and family; and *she* was greatly preferred, whose mother had done the state some service by producing a certain number of thick-headed boys, and simpering girls. It was also necessary that the family should damn the name of Cromwell with pious fervour, wear oak in their hats on the 29th of May, and always think with the King, be his sentiments what they might.

The grandfather of the principal subject of the following memoirs had married, as directed, a lady of great fortune, virtue and decorum. Her erudition, for those times, was superior. She read with tolerable fluency—worked all sorts of heavy carpet-work, and tent-stitch—wrote the long, cramped, upright hand of the day, and left a large book of receipts a legacy to her daughter, as a specimen, the spelling of which was reckoned admirable—indeed, rather pedantic—though probably it would not now undergo the same criticism, since even lords and ladies in these days are tolerable proficients.

Two sons and a daughter blessed this auspicious union; and the sun of the Montrevilles yet shone in unclouded splendour. But man cannot always expect uninterrupted prosperity. This long beaming luminary of a fortunate house had now reached its fullest lustre, and was soon to be extinguished in shades, in darkness, in total eclipse.

The most intimate acquaintance of Sir Charles Montreville was a Mr. Castleton, whose estate was contiguous to the principal one—for he had now many—of the Baronet. Two daughters composed part of Mr. Castleton's family, and were really handsome and accomplished girls; for education was then making some progress even for females. To unite the families by a double marriage was equally the wish of both the elders, and the young Charles, who beheld in this union the aggrandizement so much coveted, would willingly have accepted her who was to procure it, even had she been a perfect Hecate. But Caroline Castleton was young and lovely, and he fancied that he really loved her. As if love

could animate a heart where *self* reigned omnipotent! The fair Caroline was amiable and gentle, and unfortunately had already found her counterpart in the second hope of the house of Montreville. It is not the history of this period, upon which the editor is to dwell—suffice it, therefore, to observe, that, unmindful of the pain thus inflicted upon two amiable and severed hearts, (for Edward Montreville was equally attached to Caroline,) she became the wife of the elder son; whilst Janetta, imperious, haughty and ill-tempered, was paired, not matched, with the younger. Sir Charles had two reasons to urge in excuse for this arbitrary conduct. The larger fortune of Caroline, he imagined, ought to augment the overflowing coffers of the future Baronet, who would have so much expensive dignity to support, in addition to the family the eldest son was always expected to possess. His second motive was, that as Caroline had a remarkably sweet temper, and Charles quite the reverse, her mild and gentle influence would correct his asperity—and, *vice versa*, with the other ill-matched

pair. The parties were married, and Edward and Janetta removed to a beautiful estate belonging to her, whilst Charles and his bride fixed themselves in a magnificent mansion, surrounded by every possible luxury. In due time the usual appearances were expected—anxious enquiries were continually made as to the health of Mrs. Charles Montreville; and the Baronet's lady, though almost crippled by rheumatism, hobbled with intense and painful curiosity to Montreville House. Alas! In vain was the inquisition! No favourable answer met her ears —she saw not the varying look, the wandering appetite—this was the greatest misfortune, and mortification which they had known for many years. To complete their vexation, at the expiration of eleven months, Mrs. Edward Montreville called for their congratulations on the birth of a son. But here again misfortune assailed them. Janetta, loud, arrogant, self willed, and fully aware of the importance of her son, in default of any of her sister's, insisted, with a vehemence which almost annihilated her husband, on naming the child Castleton.

"The stupid system of perpetuating two names has been long enough adhered to," said she. "Had Caroline produced a son, mine would have been disregarded, and no one would have cared if he had been nameless. I will command in this instance, and retaliate on those haughty parents, who have so little conciliated me. If that boy be not named Castleton, I swear never to love, never to notice him."

Edward was too well acquainted with the unyielding temper of his wife to dare dispute her will—the child was named Castleton, and enmity declared between the families in consequence. Many years rolled heavily on, and no child was born to the elder Montreville. Janetta had several other children, but none of them attained to maturity; and the anathematized Castleton seemed doomed to proclaim his hated name as heir to the title and dignities. At the end of thirteen years Lady Montreville died, without having once beheld her grandson—at least the child of her son—for Miss Montreville had been married, soon after her brothers, to a Mr. Ravens-

croft, a man of family and fortune, and she had young *Charleses* and Henriettas in abundance. Sir Charles foretold the downfal of his greatness in the untoward instances above mentioned; and fairly fretted himself into that state, which occasioned his premature death. He was sensible that his dissolution would not long be protracted; and he, therefore, gave his thoughts to such a settlement of his affairs as might mark his continued anger towards Edward Montreville. The will, thus dictated by resentment, was strongly urged by Charles, who, though not himself to be an eventual gainer, was satisfied since his brother would be a material sufferer. Anxious to punish, in every possible way, the contumacy of his younger son, and the boy, whose only crime was his name, Sir Charles selected, as the heir of all he could dispose of, (that is, of all his unentailed property,) the elder son of his daughter, whose proper appellation was Charles, and who had for some time taken the name of Montreville—always provided his own son Charles did not marry again, and give an immediate heir to the

title. Every thing was left in the power of the new Baronet, however, for life; whilst to Edward not a single legacy marked his recollection of such a being. If young Castleton Montreville died without heirs, every thing he inherited from the Montreville family was to pass to this favored cousin. The Baronet seemed to have lived only to indulge this last effort of malignity. He expired very soon after, without one regret for the probable misery he had inflicted on an innocent son.

The new Baronet ordered his steward to give Mr. Montreville the proper intelligence of the decease of their father, and an invitation to be present at the opening of the will, as it would necessarily occasion him a shock, which this affectionate brother had no wish to spare him. Janetta, who really languished to see her sister, determined, though uninvited, to accompany her husband, and he, though very unwilling to encounter a brother's estranged eye, could not, from motives of duty to his son's interest, refuse to go. He felt shocked

and afflicted when he remembered that his father had died at enmity with him, but to mourn him deeply and continually was out of the question, treated as he had been. The effect of the will, however, was more painful, even on the score of affection, than he expected. The most trifling gift of kindness would have soothed a heart cruelly wounded by the conduct and reception of his brother, who, in the most haughty and distant manner, had not only withheld any invitation to himself and his wife; but had given him to understand that his presence would only be required at Montreville House, for the purpose of hearing the will. During the bustle of the funeral, and the ceremony of declaring the last intentions of the deceased, the sisters found an opportunity of meeting, which, had the imperious Baronet been aware of, would have been denied. The interview was sufficiently painful to both. Each found the other changed almost beyond recognition, but Janetta, especially, found Caroline a mere spectre, altered as much by unvarying

years of wretchedness, as by bodily suffering. Happiness had not been the lot of either in their ill-assorted union, though Janetta might have been happy, if her own temper would have allowed her. The only interchange of words between the two brothers was respecting these ladies—"Had I given way to your foolish whim of superior affection for Caroline," said Sir Charles, "both might have been more comfortable. I should have had an heir, whose degenerate name would never have given pain to his ancestors—I should have escaped a sickly, whining, crying moppet, whose only recommendation was her money."

"Would to God my foolish whim had indeed been indulged!" replied Edward, mournfully, "How much misery had been spared, had more been allowed to the heart, and less to ambition!"

The two families parted, and met no more. A fever carried off Janetta a few weeks after these events, and Sir Charles envied his brother this liberation from the marriage-chain; though, in sighing anxious-

ly after a similar release, as he himself did, it was only for the purpose of renewing his captivity, in the hope of dispossessing, by a son of his own, the two nephews, whom he almost equally hated.

CHAPTER II.

Whilst thus malignity and cabal employed the thoughts and guided the schemes of the inhabitants of Montreville House, the innocent and unconscious object of these base passions grew up from youth to manhood, amiable and happy, in spite of the efforts of two weak parents to spoil him. However Mr. and Mrs. Montreville might dispute on other subjects, and indeed they seldom agreed on any, on one they mutually coincided—that of unlimited indulgence to their son. His own disposition fortunately counteracted their folly; for this otherwise pernicious error, so far from spoiling his temper, hardening his heart, or perverting his understanding, only made him more gratefully affectionate towards those, whose every action and thought, as directed towards him, were to promote his

happiness. It is, indeed, scarcely possible to imagine a more delightful disposition, more buoyant and happy spirits, talents better cultivated, or a finer form, than at the age of nineteen Castleton Montreville possessed. His heart was too full of warm affections to observe with indifference the family feuds, particularly as he saw how much they affected his father, who never ceased to condemn in his own breast the weakness, which, in giving up all power to his wife, had so essentially injured his son. It is true the folly of setting so much value on a name was an absurdity which he condemned, but knowing his father's obstinate preference, it was an absurdity he felt he ought to have complied with. Conscious, however, that complaint was now unavailing, he confined his regrets to himself, and at least avoided one source of domestic altercation. Castleton's education had been sedulously attended to, and was at once solid and brilliant. His youth had been passed in felicity, and, with the elastic spirit which characterises that period, he looked forward with

ardent hope to a manhood of equal delight. His first affliction was the death of his mother; for that of his grandfather, whom he had never seen, could not be supposed to affect him any otherwise, than as it gave his father pain. To pecuniary considerations he was perfectly indifferent. He knew he should possess the Castleton estate in right of his mother, and that a certain property belonged of course to the title. Avarice is rarely the vice of youth; and having listened to his father's regrets on the subject of his lessened fortune, he laughed at and forgot them. But the death of that tender mother, who had so industriously anticipated and gratified every wish of his, struck with no common force at his affectionate heart; and his father, who rather missed Mrs. Montreville from habit than love, saw with pain the deep and increasing dejection of his son. To relieve this he proposed a trip to the continent, which nothing indeed but Janetta's unwillingness to part from Castleton would have delayed so long. Castleton assented, and every necessary arrangement

was speedily made, when Sir Charles Montreville, in a sudden fit of generosity, held out to his too placable brother the welcome olive branch, and by a letter, wherein fine words covered the absence of sincerity, invited him and Castleton to Montreville House; an invitation which Edward gladly accepted, but which Castleton would much rather have refused. The proposed trip to the continent was postponed, and the travellers bent their course towards Cornwall, where the great family estate was situated. Sir Charles received his brother, whom he had so lately ill-treated, and the nephew whom he had never seen, with an appearance of affection so eager as to border on the ridiculous. Mr. Montreville wished to believe him sincere, and would not appear to doubt. Castleton, with a stronger and more penetrating mind, and no native regard to throw a veil over fine acting, was disgusted, and received very coldly the warm pressure of the hand, and the fulsome praises lavished on him by his uncle. Still more was he offended at the fawning adulation, which marked the looks

and manners of the adopted heir, who was generally called Mr. Ravenscroft Montreville. He shrunk from the insidious smile, the flattering compliment, the ready offers of service he received from this young man; he read in these specious manners only low cunning and sinister designs. The manners of Castleton Montreville were rather reserved, and he was frequently reckoned haughty till well known. Certain it is, that, without being really the imperious character he was believed, he had the art of repressing forward ignorance, or pert presumption. Even his young cousin sometimes shrunk from his glance of superiority, though it was not often in the power of any one to intimidate him by *silent* reproof. Lady Montreville was, most provokingly, in somewhat better health, but her spirits in such a complete state of depression, that it might almost be called melancholy madness. She never mixed with the family, and thus Mr. Montreville was spared the affliction of witnessing the total wreck of all that was formerly gay and lovely, and beloved. Sir Charles once veh-

tured to *lament* the singular will their father had made, particularly, he was pleased to say, since he had known his nephew. Mr. Montreville silenced the hypocrite with a look, and he never again dared to repeat the glaring untruth. Here Castleton received his first, but ineffectual, lesson in love; for led by friendship and compassion, a fair and amiable girl paid that kind attention to the neglected Lady Montreville which her own relations, and, indeed, her own household, seldom shewed. Miss Archerly was a distant relative of Lady Montreville's, and to a person sufficiently lovely to create admiration, she added manners that demanded respect, and an independence that secured it. Castleton had never seen so handsome a girl, and his ardent breast readily received the warm impression. But he admired, even more than her beauty, the steady and invariable propriety with which she repulsed the arrogant pretensions of the heir, as Ravenscroft Montreville was frequently termed. This young man fancied that riches comprised every other good, and that where he

condescended to bestow his notice, it was the height of ignorance and folly for one so favoured to reject his attentions. Maria Archerly took some pains to cure him of ideas so erroneous; and having first lectured and then laughed at him, she now treated him with silent contempt. Castleton was completely charmed; and with all the eagerness natural to his age and character, first offered her his heart and hand, and then thought of his father's probable disapprobation. Maria admired and esteemed the animated Castleton; but thanking him for the honor he did her in his good opinion, at once and decidedly told him she was under positive engagements to another. Poor Castleton, unused to disappointment, and not at all prepared to expect it in the present instance, was overwhelmed with grief. Miss Archerly soothed his pain, listened with patience to his determination never to forget her, and never to love another, and then coolly, but not unfeelingly, told him he was mistaken. "Believe me, my dear friend," said she, "you totally mistake the

nature, or at least calculate very ill on the duration, of your feelings. I am sure you never fancied yourself in love before; I dare say you think you never can love again; but I am persuaded when you and I meet again, you will own a different tale. Love cannot exist without some degree of hope; I can give you none,—not the smallest ray,—for I am affectionately attached to the man I am to marry, and to tell you a truth I shall not tell to any other, in a very few weeks I shall resign the name of Archerly. But," she added, more seriously, " I would give you one parting word of advice in regard to that susceptible heart of yours. Guard its feelings, my dear Montreville; and ere you resign yourself to the influence of the blind deity, remember that over hearts like yours he reigns tyrannically. If I know your character, you will never be *reasonably* happy in love,—beware lest you blindly rush on misery!"

Alas! how truly did this dear woman point out the very rock on which the friend so warned did actually split! Miss Archerly

left Montreville House the following day, and three weeks afterwards gave her hand to Mr. Giffard *, with whom she shared, for some fleeting years, a greater portion of wedded happiness than usually falls to the lot of mortals.

* It is, perhaps, superfluous to add, that these were the beloved and honoured parents of the Editor of these pages. Peace to their beatified spirits!—*Note by the Editor.*

CHAPTER III.

Cornwall became insupportable to Castleton after Miss Archerly quitted Montreville House, particularly when the heir, who had observed with no small share of envy the preference she gave his cousin, dared, unawed by his haughty brow, to hazard some impertinent attempts at wit. Mr. Montreville was accustomed to comply at all times with his son's wishes, and now really felt glad that he requested to leave a place, of which he had himself long been weary. Both parties separated with the same appearances of regard with which they had met, and Sir Charles graciously gave his brother a promise of returning this visit in Derbyshire. The young men parted with less shew of cordiality; and when Sir Charles hinted at his nephew's accompanying him in this visit, and Mr. Montreville extended his invitation accordingly, Castleton only bowed. "Proud, supercilious puppy!"

exclaimed the chagrined youth, as the carriage drove off, "you nerve my determination by your insolence, and bitterly shall you repent this conduct."—"Be quiet, Ravenscroft," said Sir Charles, "you shall have your revenge. I have studied that boy without his suspecting me, and I have digested a plan which shall amply humble his arrogant spirit."

Mr. Montreville and Castleton, meanwhile, were quietly journeying towards home, and the latter remembered with many a heavy sigh, that there no tender mother awaited his return, to welcome him back with smiles of delight, or to question him with pleased interest of his adventures. Even his father missed the accustomed "Well, Mr. Montreville!" uttered in a cheerful or querulous tone, according to the temper of the speaker, and every room in his house seemed to give an idea of silent loneliness. Janetta was of a social turn, and loved to collect a gay circle round her, particularly against her son's return from any party of amusement. Severely, therefore, each felt the present gloomy stillness;

and an evening of silence and abstraction succeeded, in which Miss Archerly's image was blended with his mother's in the mental reveries of Castleton, whilst his brother and the sycophantic heir divided the thoughts of Mr. Montreville in no pleasant manner.

For some weeks after Castleton's return, he indulged in sighs and lover-like contemplations, especially after hearing of Miss Archerly's marriage. Solitary rambles, and silent abstraction, became his constant habits. In one of these wanderings, he found himself at the distance of about five miles from home, opposite an old but magnificent mansion, which had long been untenanted. To his great surprise, however, he now saw evident signs of preparation, as if for inhabitants, and those of no vulgar rank. Workmen were employed in repairs —painters were everywhere busy, and handsome modern windows substituted for the narrow old gothic casements of former times. Packages too of valuable and modern furniture were scattered about, and every thing indicated the expected arrival

of a family. Castleton went up to the Abbey, as the house was called, and inquired of the workmen who was about to inhabit it? "Mr. Coventry, Sir," replied the man. "I understand he has bought it of Sir Thomas Molyneux, who is gone over sea for debt. Mr. Coventry and his son will be down in a day or two, but the ladies don't come, I fancy, till every thing is ready." Of Mr. Coventry the man knew no more than that he was a gentleman of very large fortune, with a wife, a son about two and twenty, and a daughter some years younger. Castleton was pleased to hear of so pleasant an addition to the circle of friends, and returned home to relate what he had heard, with a gayer turn of thoughts and countenance than he had lately evinced; nor was he sorry to find that Mr. Coventry and his father were once intimate, and would in all probability be mutually pleased to renew their old friendship, and see it extended to their children. This fortunate incident appeared to give animation to the pensive Castleton, and every day he directed his walk to the Abbey. After a few days he

observed some spaniels about the house, and at a distance in the fields a young man of gentlemanly appearance, whom he supposed to be young Mr. Coventry. He was desired by his father to offer to the strangers every accommodation at the Manor, on the score of old friendship; and whilst he was deliberating whether to follow the junior, or seek the senior gentleman, the latter came forth from the house, and, seeing him, bowed. Castleton stepped forward to meet him, and in the name of Mr. Montreville gave a pressing invitation to both gentlemen to Castleton Manor. Mr. Coventry remembered his old friend well, and though he declined becoming a permanent guest, declared himself very ready to become frequently a temporary one. "It is so pleasant a thing to be thus recognized immediately on my arrival in a new county," said he, "that I accept it as an earnest of future and most agreeable intimacy. I recollect your father, Sir, one of the gayest and most gallant men about the metropolis, and I see his very pleasing figure revived in you." Castleton bowed and blushed, and thought

Mr. Coventry, though somewhat formal and precise, a very agreeable man. "I must have the pleasure," continued Mr. Coventry, "of introducing to you my son, and, I trust, thus laying a foundation for much future friendship. Martin, call Mr. George Coventry!" Mr. George Coventry instantly appeared, and with a smile of youthful beauty and most winning good humour, frankly professed his hope of intimacy and friendship. Castleton's usually stately manner changed to affability and cordiality before the graceful suavity of his new acquaintance; and having received Mr. Coventry's promise of joining them at dinner, the two young men departed together to the Manor. Similarity of sentiment and congenial feelings soon became apparent; for as neither had any thing in his heart he wished to conceal, nature was allowed to appear spontaneously, and liking rapidly improved into regard and affection. The day was passed greatly to the satisfaction of all parties, for the elders were pleased to renew the remembrance of old times, and to hear of old anecdotes, and old friends.

Castleton learnt from his new acquaintance that Mrs. and Miss Coventry were to come as soon as a part of the Abbey could be made habitable for them; "and then, Montreville," said the animated youth, "I will shew you the handsomest woman and the loveliest girl in England. My mother is a Juno—my sweet sister a Hebe."

Castleton thought of Miss Archerly, and sighed involuntarily. "Very suspicious that!" said George, laughing. "But I have no business to laugh at such symptoms; for I am as true a lover as ever sighed upon a midnight pillow! I tell you this, because though I have praised, and justly, my beautiful Julia, she will be accompanied by one whom I, perhaps—that is—I was willing, Montreville, to give you a fair impression of my sister, that you might——."

"I perfectly understand you," replied Castleton, "and promise not to admire imprudently. It is not very likely I shall ever admire again." The sadness and impenetrable gravity of Castleton's countenance made Coventry laugh. "Oh," said he, "your Cupid is a sombre deity—I pa-

tronise only his smiling godship."—"We are not all equally fortunate," replied Montreville with continued gravity; and his friend, perceiving that the wound was deeper than he had imagined, ceased to converse on the painful subject.

A month passed pleasantly to the old friends, delightfully to the new. At the expiration of that time the principal wing of the Abbey was pronounced habitable, and only to require proper airing. Mrs. Coventry fixed her time of coming at the distance of a fortnight, and all was joyful expectation. Castleton had in this time revealed to Coventry the secret sorrow of his heart, the name of the lady alone excepted. George was aware of his past error in laughing at the tender folly, and forbore to offend again; but he smiled inwardly, and anticipated the effect of his sister's eyes, which he heartily wished might be more convincing than his arguments. In this sentiment, though unknown to each other, Mr. Coventry joined, though not in the same spirit which actuated his more generous son. Worldly and keen, he looked to the future

title, the large property which Castleton would enjoy; for, ignorant, as yet, of his grandfather's will, he imagined the accumulated wealth and honors of many generations would finally centre in Castleton Montreville.

CHAPTER IV.

"THEY are come, my dear Montreville, they are here, and await with impatience the pleasure of being introduced to you. My father expects you and Mr. Montreville to dinner. I should have *said* all this instead of *writing* it, but I sum up my excuse in one word—Almeria! Adieu!

GEORGE COVENTRY."

Such was the billet which greeted Castleton's eyes when first he descended, the morning after Mrs. Coventry's arrival at the Abbey. With mixed sensations of sadness, pleasure, and expectation, he proceeded long before the dinner-hour to his friend's, with pre-determined indifference towards both the younger ladies, and a more positive preference for his first unfortunate love. He, nevertheless, attended more sedulously to the duties of the toilette than

usual, and certainly exhibited none of Shakespeare's marks of a true and despairing lover. As he passed through the lawn towards the house, he saw his friend and two ladies walking, whom he supposed to be his sister and the fair Almeria. He was right; and George having perceived him, he was immediately introduced in the most flattering manner to them both, and saw with infinite surprise, that though Julia was indeed all that her brother had represented, or a lover could imagine, Miss Rosenthwaite was merely pretty, possessing a face of great good humour, but common interest, and a little delicate figure without any striking grace. "Such is the partiality, such the blind prejudice of love!" thought he. "Absurd! Not to have the common use of one's senses!"

His eyes turned from the pretty Almeria to the beautiful Julia, in whose every feature dwelt expression, whose every attitude was grace, and whose smile and voice conveyed an idea of melody.

Castleton, some time after this first interview, thus drew her picture, as he him-

self said, with the *unprejudiced* hand of a lover:

> "Oh! for thy pencil, Zeuxis! to pourtray
> A form as fair as e'er that pencil drew;
> That smiling mouth where dimpled graces play,
> Those speaking eyes of clear cerulean blue,
> Like the deep violet nurs'd in evening dew,
> The golden hair that decks the polish'd brow,
> The varying cheek to each emotion true;
> That cheek o'erspread with love's vermilion glow,
> Sweet contrast to the breast of pure unsullied snow!"
>
> *MS. Poem.*

Such indeed was Julia Coventry; and Castleton, though soon an ardent lover, was, in truth, an impartial one, and beheld Julia, in point of mere *beauty*, but as every one else beheld her. But he looked beyond a lovely external, and penetrated to her real character. Oh, worthy of such a casket was the precious jewel it contained! The heart of Julia was a hoard of treasures, and that admirable heart was soon wholly his, who alone deserved it. But not immediately would Montreville allow, even to himself, that what he called admiration was becoming love. He determined

to remember Maria, and the vow he had made never to love again; but it must be allowed, that, after a short time, he was frequently *obliged* to recall her image by an effort, and was sometimes reminded of her by Julia herself, when any sentiment of genuine goodness or delicacy, any graceful action, or effusion of gaiety, particularly struck him. "Such was Maria!" would he say, and he first loved Julia for the resemblance thus traced. Coventry saw the warfare in the bosom of his friend, and laughed with Almeria at the struggle. He never, however, affected to perceive the decrease of the one attachment or the increase of the other; and when Castleton sometimes endeavoured to hint at the change of sentiment, which he yet felt foolish at declaring openly, Coventry, with playful malice and affected gravity, reverted wholly to Maria, and lamented the obstinacy of a passion, which steeled the heart of his friend against every other attraction. Montreville was sometimes angry, and sometimes laughed; till, weary at length of the silence such conduct imposed, he frankly owned the truth,

and asked the assistance of Coventry in gaining his father's consent. He anticipated no small share of raillery from the mirthful George, nor was he mistaken. But having indulged his laughing good-humoured satire for some minutes, he very warmly and very seriously entered into Montreville's views and wishes, assuring him he had nothing to apprehend from either Mr. or Mrs. Coventry. As to Julia, her brother would not answer for her, though of her sentiments he believed himself very well informed. Of his own father's concurrence Castleton was well assured; and, having once braved the raillery of George, he was determined to know his fate with Julia, and her parents. All were propitious, and happiness seemed to have erected her shrine at Ashborn Abbey. Mr. Coventry was internally a little chagrined at the comparative smallness of Castleton's private property, many thousands per annum having been completely alienated, and much more placed upon the very uncertain chance of his having a son. Enough, however, still remained to destroy every pretext

for withdrawing a consent, which he had certainly given under the idea of a much superior fortune. Mr. Coventry was a man of the world, consequently selfish, and could not help wishing he had taken less for granted as to young Montreville's riches. He half wished also that he could see the man, for whose sake he had been thus impoverished. He had a considerable veneration for title, particularly so respectable a one as that of Montreville; but he preferred the solid advantages of riches, and of these he fancied no man ever had enough. His daughter's property was large, as, independent of what he could give her, she had a legacy of fifteen thousand pounds from her maternal grandfather, a fortune of no inconsiderable magnitude in those days, when women did not game, and a winter in London did not include almost all the year's income; when ladies might appear twice in the same dress; shew the same furniture in their drawing-rooms two or three seasons; and be satisfied with a combination of useful and magnificent, without running into ruinous expense

to combine the ridiculous and unneces-sary *.

Mrs. Coventry, who was full as proud and as fond of money as her husband, thought much of seeing her daughter a *lady*,

* It is true one might imagine, in contrasting not only the quality but the quantity of a lady's apparel then and now, that the former period must have been incalculably more expensive, and that a female habited in flowing velvet robes, stretched over large hoops decorated with rich embroidery, and trimmed with costly laces, must be more than equal to the price of a short, clinging dress of white satin with two breadths, or an India muslin drawn tight to a figure, where not even two substantial petticoats help to fill it out; where nothing is wasted for sleeves, or back, or bosom, and where Dovey's paste is substituted, in a modern dress wig, for the valuable jewels which formerly glittered in the hair of our great grandmothers. All this seems to say that old times must have been more expensive; but if we consider that these ancient ladies made one splendid dress serve many occasions, and that our moderns scorn to appear two nights in the same, the balance is very unequal. Add to which, the modest demands of modern mantua-makers—(I humbly ask pardon—*dress*-makers),—and the flimsiness of the articles themselves.—*Note by the Editor.*

and hearing and repeating the delightful sound of "my daughter Lady Montreville." Baronets were not then so plentiful as now, nor the *purchase* so easily made; Mrs. Coventry was delighted at the prospect for her daughter, and changed somewhat of her usually cold and haughty manners for a more pleasing expression towards Castleton. Mrs. Coventry had not married young, and possessed few besides the usual female accomplishments of that period; but she had more liberal ideas of education than uneducated people generally have; and Julia, coming into the world thirty years later than her mother, was certainly very superior in every intellectual, as well as bodily accomplishment. Such as she was, she was calculated to inspire and to preserve the most enthusiastic affection—such Castleton Montreville cherished for her to the latest hour of his existence—and such made, at different times, the happiness and misery of his life. This was the most brilliant period of his existence, as indeed it is in the life of most people—no gloomy foreboding

destroyed his enjoyment of the present, or his hopes for the future—he slept to dream of bliss, and awoke to realize the vision. Preparations were making for the double wedding, it being agreed that Julia and Almeria were to be brides at the same time; and those, who are happy lovers themselves, well know how the intermediate time is passed.

"How lightly falls the foot of time,
"That only treads on flowers!

In the midst of happiness and gaiety, his thoughts reverted to Mrs. Giffard; no longer, indeed, with love, but with a friendship warmer than the love of many. He had once or twice written to her since her marriage, and in a style which, though equally respectful as tender, convinced her that she might, had she been light, vain, and desirous of conquest, still have kept him in her chains. She employed ridicule and raillery in opposition to his hints of attachment—showed his letters to her husband, who laughed with her at professions too romantic to be sup-

ported; and anticipated at length, in one or two subsequent letters, where he oddly jumbled her and Julia together, the speedy extinction of a passion, which she never believed very violent in reality.

CHAPTER V.

NOTE.—*(The Editor inserts here two letters, which are more expressive of the real feelings and actual circumstances at that time existing, than a more regular narrative.)*

CASTLETON MONTREVILLE TO MRS. GIFFARD.

FOUR months are passed since I wrote you an account of our new neighbours, and received that delicate raillery from you in answer, which even at the time embarrassed me. Four months—two of which, I must fairly acknowledge, at the risk of more bantering from you, have been to me replete with felicity! I am in Elysium, my dear friend, though were I addressing any other woman than yourself, I should fear more than raillery in your reply. To own to a woman still so lovely, so charming as yourself, that you *once* reigned paramount

in my heart! A vain coquet would be mortified at such an avowal. But you, Maria, are ever amiable, ever dear, and if I own your image is at length subordinate to that of Julia, you may be fully assured, that to Julia alone can you ever be secondary in my heart. I told you she was fair, I told you she was amiable,—in this she resembles you, and it was a certain chaste gaiety, a delicacy sweetly-feminine, yet abhorring affectation, an interesting simplicity, which reminding me of you, first attached me to her; so that even in my second love I am not wholly unfaithful to my first. Certain it is, that you originally awakened my perception to what was truly captivating in woman, and my Julia seems to have caught from you the realizing power. Did she ever know you, Maria? I have been two months the accepted lover of Julia Coventry, and a short time will, I hope, behold her my wife. Where all consent, and fortune smiles, why should we delay happiness? She has promised to live with my father, and Castleton Manor is already the busy theatre of improvement and decoration. I have

adorned Julia's own particular apartments in a style of elegance suited to herself. I wished to have consulted you, for females are, *at least*, superior in taste, and Julia would not advise. If you are superior in taste and fancy, I am sure you are in penetration. How much better than myself did you read my heart, when, torn with anguish and disappointment at your acknowledgment of indifference towards me, I vowed never to love again! I do love another —but I told you, too, that I would never cease to love you, and I have faithfully kept my word. Oh, how sweet is the moment, when anxious expectation yields to cheering hope! We are told that there are moments worth ages in every man's life, and woman's too, I apprehend.—Ah, how many years of happiness are comprised in that ever-remembered moment, which brings assurance of a *mutual* affection! I can but wonder to see *how blind some lovers are;* and smile when I recollect Coventry's praises of his sister ere I had beheld her, lest I should look with too favorable sentiments on Almeria. A brother only could view Julia with eyes of less ad-

miration than Miss Rosenthwaite. Could you see Miss Coventry, you would acquit *me* of seeing only through a lover's veil, and acknowledge, as every one must *without prejudice*, that she is indeed supreme in loveliness. My father, I feared, drooped a short time back, but this happy prospect for his son has quite revived him. Oh, how sweetly does my Julia cherish and attend to him! Her voice of melody—her eye of love—her smile of benignity—they speak to him of comfort for himself—of felicity to me, and he blesses her who dispenses the beauteous promise. Why must I damp this lovely picture, by telling you any thing unpleasant? Why turn from nature, love, and truth, to their hideous contraries—to art—to hatred, and to fraud? We are threatened with a visit from the Cornwall people—from the Baronet and 'the Heir.' Judge how well we shall coalesce. My uncle, though I owe him nothing, (and for that I thank him) I could bear,—but Ravenscroft—'the Heir'—the sycophant! He shall not see my Julia! No, Maria, not a glance. I doubt not her truth, but I know his cun-

ning, his falsehood. No, he shall not see her.' The mention of this fellow has irritated me. I must fly to the lovely reality of Julia's artless smile, and melodious tones, to banish the hateful vision of Ravenscroft's cunning leer, and the grating sound of discordant malignity.

Adieu, my dear Mrs. Giffard. You will laugh at the petulant conclusion of my letter —I am not certain whether the former part will not equally tempt a smile. But, indeed, I myself am rational, unprejudiced, and laugh at the blindness, which so frequently deludes others. Farewell!

C. MONTREVILLE.

MRS. GIFFARD, IN ANSWER.

No, I do not smile at your ardent enthusiasm, my dear Montreville, for I behold it in perspective a source of evil. But let me not a second time disappoint you in the high hope of your heart. This is not a period to play either the prophetess or the monitress, for one smile from Julia would overturn a host of arguments. You have rendered it impossible for me to dispute the reality of Miss Coventry's attractions, by

the model you have more poetically than truly drawn for her. Self-love, of course, leads me to credit even your lavish enumeration of good qualities; and friendship, let me say *affection*, for you, bids me fervently hope you may indeed be an *unprejudiced* lover—the first the world ever knew. But the same enthusiasm which teaches you to hope and believe so much, will doubly point the sting, should disappointment, in any shape, await you. I have inquired much of Miss Coventry; for I have had a friend on a visit here, who knows them all, and I have heard that, which makes me anxious to call her the wife of my friend. She is worthy of you, and I anticipate only happiness for you both. Soon may your hopes and my own be realized! How can you be so irritable on the subject of Ravenscroft Montreville? He is too pitiful even for petulance; too knavish to be trusted; and too weak to be a proper knave. You know him well, and therefore he is not dangerous; yet I am not sure whether I exactly disapprove your resolution of forbidding his introduction to Julia: yet I can give no reason for so foolish a whim, and

blame myself for indulging so absurd an idea; I have a great mind to expunge it;—but no. Now tell me honestly, Castleton, were you to speak without disguise, would you not own that you at present really *love* for the first time? Would you not confess that you fancied a pleasant little kind of romance, to which *ennui* or idleness gave birth, and of which you did me the honour to make me the heroine, perhaps for want of a better? I shrewdly suspect this; but so long as it proves a reality of happiness to you, I will pardon my being the mistress of a vision.

I saw your uncle a short time since—he looks very ill; and I think, notwithstanding the attempts of 'the Heir' to be agreeable, he begins to sicken of hypocrisy, which I am sure he clearly detects.

I should like to see Julia and Almeria together. I would venture a trifling wager that I thought the *latter the handsomer:* after which piece of impertinence, I dare not add farther, than those assurances of regard and friendship, which I hope you will never doubt.

MARIA GIFFARD.

CHAPTER VI.

Soon after these two letters had passed, Sir Charles and Mr. Ravenscroft Montreville arrived at the Manor, considerably earlier than was expected. The asseveration of Castleton, that the heir should never behold Julia, was the angry impulse of the moment, and probably thought of no more; but the remark of Mrs. Giffard startled and perplexed him, and instead of greeting his guests with the usual compliments, his first impulse was to fly to the Abbey, and snatch Julia from he knew not what. To do this was impossible, particularly as his father was absent; and he sat impatiently execrating the impertinence of visits made without due notice, and contriving plans for Julia's removal. Thus mentally occupied, he answered unthinkingly he knew not what to every question or observation made by the two gentlemen, and

was recalled to a sense of absurdity only by the wondering looks exchanged between them. The return of his father at length relieved Castleton from the trouble of supporting a trifling and uninteresting conversation; but it by no means removed his anxiety to observe that Mr. Coventry accompanied him. An invitation from that gentleman for the whole party to dine on the following day at the Abbey completed Castleton's disturbance, and put an end to the schemes he had endeavoured to form for Julia's removal. He was not much afraid that she should view Ravenscroft with too favourable an eye, for she had received a prejudice by no means in his favour. In fact he knew not of what to be apprehensive, yet a melancholy foreboding hung over his mind, which he tried as vainly to shake off as to account for.

Mr. Montreville was not much more elated at this visit than his son, though no idea of Julia was attached to its future consequences; but he had not learned to respect or love his brother, nor did the Baronet's fawning adulation to himself and

Castleton increase these feelings; but, on the contrary, conduct so new, and for which no visible reason existed, excited a belief of some sinister views of interest or ambition, in which he was to be bribed to participate. To pass the whole day away from Julia and in such company, was more than Castleton could or would agree to, and shaking off, by a pardonable artifice, the officious and teazing Ravenscroft, he hastened in the evening to the Abbey, half tempted to try and carry off Julia, and make her securely his wife, before the hated heir should have seen her. The plan, absurd as it was, appeared feasible to the heated and perturbed brain of the impetuous lover, and he slackened his pace in order to try and bring it into some method. He execrated his own stupidity in never having arranged such a scheme before, against such an emergency—wished Mrs. Giffard had been more explicit, or entirely silent—and had almost determined to propose his mad plan, with its very inadequate origin, to George Coventry, when he found himself suddenly in company with him and

three other young men, all evidently in high spirits, to which the jolly god had contributed. This unexpected rencontre put an end to plans and reveries, and, mechanically accompanying the rest, he found himself in a room full of gay and animated guests, and beheld Julia seated at her harp, as if just about to play. He was received with pleasure by the party, who, like his own neglected guests, had come unexpectedly for two or three days. Julia's smile was sweet as usual, and the lovely candour of her expressive countenance, which modestly and unequivocally acknowledged her distinguished love, set his half-jealous and impatient heart at rest. He soon forgot Ravenscroft, till young Coventry and his merry friends, repeating the hated name, recalled his image to his mind. The conversation, however, was not of a nature to alarm him for its too pleasing effect on Julia, since the unfortunate absentee was too generally disliked to be highly praised, and the present animadversions on his person, conduct, and accomplishments, were better calculated to make

him ridiculous than admired. Castleton, though he did not join the quizzing party, could not forbear smiling when he heard him stigmatized as the meanest and most contemptible parasite that ever, by dirty adulation, raised himself from obscurity to consequence—such consequence, at least, as money could procure, for of any other he was utterly destitute.

Hours passed unheeded by the now vivacious Castleton, who lost in the smiles and gaiety of Julia all present ideas of future ill, and all those vague fears, which, even to himself, were indefinable. He returned home sufficiently late to find, as he wished, the family retired to bed. His father, however, heard him pass along the gallery to his own apartment, and calling to him, gave him a gentle rebuke for his rude neglect of young Ravenscroft. Castleton pleaded guilty, though without any promises of future amendment. As he pressed his father's hand he was startled by its dry and feverish touch, and to his earnest inquiries Mr. Montreville confessed himself unwell, but attributed it wholly to the more

than usual exertions he had been obliged to make, and the later hour he had been compelled to observe, in compliment to his guests, and in consequence of Castleton's absence, a circumstance which alone caused his son any regret as to his own want of politeness and attention towards them. After resting, Mr. Montreville found himself considerably better, and at the appointed time, after a long and tedious morning, in which Castleton forced himself to be civilly polite to his younger inmate, they all adjourned to Ashborn Abbey, where a large and gay party were assembled. Castleton minutely scrutinized the countenance of Ravenscroft as he introduced him to Julia, but the vacant monotony of his heavy features preserved their usual dulness, and the astonished Castleton felt angry at a stupidity, which, with lover-like inconsistency, would have been equally annoying to him if exchanged for admiration. He soon left the insensible fool to send his heavy eyes at leisure round to the rest of the company, and taking his own station at the back of Julia's chair, lost all recollec-

tion that such an insignificant reptile was present. He was talking to Miss Coventry with smiling earnestness in a low tone, a little apart from any other person; her sweet eyes were raised to his as she attended to what he was saying, and the expression of the two countenances, their beauty, and the grace of their attitude, were worthy the attention of a painter. Suddenly they turned their eyes at the same moment on Ravenscroft Montreville, and both started at the intense look of malignity and withering malice, which his features displayed, convincing Castleton, that though insipidity and folly were the usual garb in which he dressed his stupid face, it was by no means the only one he could assume. That appalling glance was remembered long after it had been observed, and now filled the hearts of this innocent pair with terror, though each was unable to account for the mutual feeling. Ravenscroft saw the effect he had caused, and immediately softening his dark features to their common vacancy, resumed his silly and continual grin. Indeed he had been inadvertently betrayed

by envy, at the sight of love and happiness, into an error he seldom committed—that of really shewing his sentiments. He was far from intending at present to make known his actual thoughts, or to display his true character; and he was extremely chagrined at having so far forgotten his usual caution, as to betray a portion of his feelings in a manner which, by putting the objects of them on their guard, might eventually counteract certain designs by no means of a friendly nature. Certain it is, he had awakened suspicion in breasts, too naturally good to imbibe any without a cause; and though they knew not what to apprehend, or in what way evil was to reach them, they yet felt, and owned they did feel, uncomfortable, whenever the horrid countenance of the heir recurred to their imagination.

CHAPTER VII.

The observations, which Ravenscroft's evil eyes, as Julia called them, elicited from the lovers, were by no means favourable to an increase of good-will, or attention in the manners of Castleton towards him; while Coventry, imbibing the disgust of his sister, and his friend, treated him also with coolness, and evident dislike. Sir Charles and his brother had been quite long enough together to discover that fraternal affection would never again unite them; and as both the baronet and his satellite became assured of the little respect in which they were held, by the friends of Mr. Montreville and his son—old Mr. Coventry alone excepted—they began to turn their thoughts towards Cornwall. Indeed they had been long enough in Derbyshire to plan those atrocities, which they afterwards dared to commit. Still a hope of prying yet farther into the future plans of the two families of

Montreville and Coventry induced them to linger, till a letter from the house-steward, with the news of Lady Montreville's sudden death, obliged them in mere decency to expedite their departure. They separated with more professions, and even less sincerity, on the Cornish side at least, than they had met; and the last look the two brothers ever exchanged was marked by any thing rather than affection, or kindness.

The departure of the hated Ravenscroft was the signal of returning serenity, and happiness to Castleton and Julia. The preparations for the weddings again went on with spirit, and his absence was a source of general congratulation. The only person who was silent on the occasion was Mr. Coventry; who viewing with an envious eye the immense accumulation of riches which would eventually centre in the Heir, overlooked the disposition and manners, which disgusted every one else. He frequently employed himself in mental calculations of the certain wealth this young man would inherit, and but too often caught himself comparing the inferior value of an

empty title with the full coffers of this enviable commoner. Comparatively, indeed, he might call Castleton's an empty title; for though his income, which his grandfather and uncle *could* not alienate, (the only reason why they *had* not,) amounted to nearly five thousand a year, that of Mr. Ravenscroft Montreville was at least treble the sum. These calculations, however, he kept to himself, fortunately conceiving that honour forbade their publicity, and sighing as he remembered this. A very few days only intervened before the arrival of that happy one, which was to unite four attached hearts for ever. The gay bridegrooms-elect even said, as they clasped the fair hand of each beloved maid, '*To-morrow* this dear hand is mine for life;-*to-morrow* we begin to live for happiness and each other!' Alas! To-morrow is indeed a day that never arrives! The evening before the so fondly anticipated event was to take place, Mr. Montreville expired in the arms of his son, suddenly, and with no previous warning, save a trifling languor and indisposition of a day or two before, which

the surgeon had pronounced of no consequence. Castleton had ever been a most duteous and affectionate son; but even the filial grief, which such an event must occasion, received a sad addition from all the combining circumstances that rushed into his mind, and overwhelmed him with forebodings of so horrible a nature as almost to affect his reason. "Julia will now never be mine!" said he to his friend Coventry. "In the grave of my dear father lies buried all my happiness. This day! oh, Coventry! this day should we have been united, and I could have defied Fate; but now she is lost to me for ever!"

"My dear Montreville," replied George, "be more reasonable. Recollect that I too should, on this day, have been a happy bridegroom, and that my felicity is, equally with your own, by this sad catastrophe deferred; yet I feel no such melancholy anticipations. I dare hope yet to possess that treasure of which I am for a time deprived, and why should you be less sanguine? You cannot doubt my sister's love and faith, and

I am sure we have never doubted yours, nor ever can."

Notwithstanding all Coventry's exhortations, however, Castleton continued to cherish these dark and gloomy sentiments for some time; but at length the affectionate attentions of Julia and her family, the security she seemed to feel of future happiness, in spite of this temporary cloud, and the restored gaiety of Coventry and Almeria, who again talked of that union which had been so inauspiciously interrupted, restored him to something like animation, and once more he hailed returning smiles.

From this state of renovated serenity he was again roused by a letter from the steward in Cornwall, who wrote express, by the desire of Sir Charles, to summon him to Montreville House to attend the last hours, and receive the dying instructions of his uncle on a point of considerable importance. Castleton hesitated, and again fears of hidden treachery crossed his mind. Had Ravenscroft written the letter he would not have attended to it; but old Butler, a ser-

vant of more than forty years' tried fidelity and worth, was not to be suspected. Respect to the revered memory of his father forbade, at present, all thoughts of matrimony, and Julia herself urged him to pay that attention to his uncle's desire which his affinity, if not his conduct, demanded. Coventry offered to accompany him; "and surely," said he, "if I am not afraid to trust Almeria to the gaieties and dissipation of London and London beaux—for thither, you know, she is decidedly summoned by her father—you need be under no apprehension as to Julia, who will vegetate quietly in the sombre shades of Ashborn. Indeed, I think the journey happens very well, for it will employ our time and thoughts, and cheat the 'lagging hours.' I beg the old Baronet's pardon, though," he added, suppressing a smile; "I forgot we are to purchase this *pleasant* recreation at the expense of his escutcheon."

Thus urged, and thus accompanied, Castleton consented to go into Cornwall, and every thing was prepared for him and his friend. The parting between the two pair

of lovers was characteristic on all sides. Coventry and Almeria, with the gaiety of unchecked and certain affection, separated with smiles and lively hopes of a short absence, which was to be the last; and Coventry, as he consigned her to the carriage and the care of his father, who was to convey her to Mr. Rosenthwaite's mansion in London, bade her beware of transferring her heart, as he should dispute its possession through the world: yet he sighed as he pressed her hand to his lips, and observed in her sparkling eyes the tear of love. Castleton and Julia had passed most of their morning without witnesses, and the swollen eyes, pallid cheeks, and agitated sighs of each, proclaimed how it had been passed. They had, in fact, infected each other with sadness and gloom; and the mutual attempt to comfort each other and inspire a brighter gleam of hope ended in a transport of grief, which both condemned, though neither could control it. Yet no doubt of their love and fidelity entered either breast—their wretchedness seemed without sufficient motive, yet was unconquerable; and Mrs. Coventry

at length was glad to take advantage of a fainting fit, into which Julia had fallen, to remove her from a repetition of a scene so agitating. Coventry seized the same moment, and hastily exchanging adieus with his mother, forced Montreville from his insensible sister, and insisted upon immediately setting off, or he would retract his promise, and not accompany him in the journey at all. Nothing, indeed, but his warm regard for Castleton could have induced him to observe a promise of which he half repented; for he expected no very pleasant tour with so gloomy a companion. Once decidedly removed from Julia, however, Castleton became more reasonable; and though his feelings were little less acute, he struggled with tolerable success to confine them to his own bosom, and Coventry's efforts at last roused him to somewhat better spirits, ere they stopped for the night at an inn, nearly sixty miles from home.

CHAPTER VIII.

After as expeditious a journey as the nature of travelling in those days admitted, the two friends arrived at Sir Charles Montreville's, and heard that the Baronet, though still living, was judged to be drawing very near his last hour. Mr. Ravenscroft Montreville, with due solemnity, received his cousin and his friend; to Castleton he was disgustingly civil; but it was very evident that Coventry's presence was equally unexpected and undesired. Sir Charles, however, who even in his last moments could dissemble, desired that every attention might be shewn to him, though he could not see him; the business which he wished to communicate to his nephew being of so agitating and engrossing a nature, as to require the reservation of every power he could now command, both mental and corporeal. Of what nature this communi-

cation was to be, Castleton could not imagine, but augured from it neither pleasure nor profit to himself. Coventry; who had already repented the undertaking altogether, found his time hang intolerably heavy, when his friend was at length closeted with the Baronet, and he himself left to the efforts of Ravenscroft, (whom he thoroughly hated and despised,) or his own, for amusement. He longed, with more than female curiosity, to know the grand secret, with which Sir Charles was occupying the attention of Castleton; and endeavoured to gain, from his sullen and taciturn companion, that information, which the other seemed determined not to afford.

In the mean time, the chamber of Sir Charles was the scene of a strange confession, and still more strange request to Castleton Montreville. He found his uncle as ghastly as sickness and conscience could make him; and heard, with great surprise, that he was a legatee to a considerable sum. "But," added the Baronet, "to this bequest is annexed one condition, and on one certain contingency it depends whether or

not this legacy is materially enlarged. I find my strength inadequate to the relation of those events, which it is necessary for you to know, ere I can ask a compliance with my dying wishes. I have not deserved much at your hands, Castleton; but, in this last awful hour, I acknowledge and lament the coldness and neglect, for which I readily beseech your forgiveness, and for which I cannot believe that your nature allows you to retain displeasure beyond the grave."

Castleton, unwilling to think it possible that a man, really hovering on the very verge of eternity, could in such a situation be guilty of duplicity, or capable of wilful deceit, felt much affected at his uncle's visible agitation; and not conceiving that the services, hinted at, could involve any farther sacrifice than a few weeks of his time, assured Sir Charles of his readiness to veil the past in oblivion, and perform the kindness expected of him in future. Sir Charles seemed revived and gratified by this assurance; and, taking an offered cordial, commenced as accurate a narrative, assisted by some written documents, as the moment of

debility allowed. Between narrative and letters Castleton collected the substance of the following events.

It appeared that about eighteen years previous to the present time, business of importance to his family had called Sir Charles into Flanders, and obliged him to reside for some time at Bruges. His figure was at that time remarkably fine, his manners very prepossessing, and his principles such as did not prevent his making use of those advantages, in every way that could promote his pleasures. Neither did his being a married man impede his profligate progress. More than one deluded girl became the neglected victim of his vices; but he conducted his crimes with great prudence, and generally contrived to commit them where no impertinent brother, or injured husband, or father, could call him to that account which he was by no means willing to give. Amongst the unfortunates thus seduced by specious villainy, was one of considerable consequence, but at that time removed from the protection and vigilance of her more particular friends. Mademoi-

selle de Launay was a young and lovely Flemish girl, whose family, originally of high expectations and noble blood, but now reduced, had suffered this only daughter to visit an aged and infirm relative, resident at Bruges. The old lady was a rich devotee, engrossed more by the care of her eternal soul, than by the young and lively girl, whom she had invited and neglected. Bertha de Launay was by no means ignorant of her charms, or their power; and, though innocent of further harm than a dangerous degree of coquetry, indulged in that art with all the vivacity of her country. Sir Charles, then Mr. Montreville, was captivated by the beauty of Bertha, and not awed by her manners. It is unnecessary to follow a libertine through those arts, which were ultimately but too successful. Bertha eluded, without trouble, a vigilance but little exerted on the part of her old relative; and Montreville conveyed her to very pleasant lodgings in an obscure village, where, as she really possessed a cultivated mind, and a great share of personal beauty, he readily gave up a large portion of his

time to her. Distractedly in love, and believing the present fondness of Montreville would never diminish, Bertha 'found all her world in that lone solitude,' which he had selected for her: and though she sometimes repented the errors of her conduct, and recollected the family she had disgraced and abjured, yet the specious blandishments of love hushed the transient grief that such recollections inspired, and again she fancied every sacrifice too little for one so dear. The situation, in which Mademoiselle de Launay soon found herself, awakened her in time to a keener sense of error, without, however, abating her attachment to Montreville, whilst it rendered her infinitely more beloved by him. He forgot, in the arms of his interesting mistress, the wife and relatives, who were vainly expecting him at home; and though the business which brought him from England waited only his presence to be concluded, he contrived continually to protract it, while he had so well arranged his affairs, that his retreat was never known. At length the hour drew near which was first to give him the name of a parent—an

hour dreaded by Bertha, who had long been awakened to the horrors of her actual situation, and felt a melancholy presentiment that she should not survive the birth of her child. At Montreville's earnest request she forbore to acquaint her sorrowing parents (if indeed they yet survived her desertion), of her situation, till after her confinement; when, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to travel, he intended to remove her and the infant to England, and place her there as the widow of a friend. Bertha, however, was right in her presentiment—she gave a female infant into Montreville's arms, and expired! The woman who had attended on *Madame de Rosemont* (the name by which Bertha had been known in her household) was considerably attached to her mistress, and willingly took charge of the child, which, as its mother was no more, Montreville no longer intended to remove. There the little Bertha continued for six years; and Montreville punctually remitted a yearly sum for her maintenance. At the end of that time he went again to Flanders, and found Bertha a lovely intelligent girl,

who gave early promise of inheriting those charms which had been fatal to her mother. To prevent their being alike fatal to her, Montreville imagined nothing so likely as a convent; and accordingly, having signified his intention to the attached nurse, who bitterly bewailed parting with her dear little charge, he carried her himself to Courtray, and consigned her to the Abbess of the ——— Convent, with whom he was a little acquainted, directing that she should be educated as one who would pass her whole life within its walls, and that she should take the veil at the age of eighteen. A handsome present was made to the Convent, and Montreville thought no more of his daughter. For some years Bertha was perfectly happy and content in her situation, and betrayed no unwillingness to the seclusion to which she was destined; but unfortunately for her future peace, she formed a friendship with a boarder in the convent, through whose means she became acquainted with a world much more pleasing to her imagination than the dreary walls in which she had been so long immured, and pleasures

much better suited to a mind naturally full of levity, than melancholy vigils, fasting, and penance. Her heart, indeed, had imbibed no particular passion; but she panted for liberty, admiration, and the gay and pleasant scenes, to which her friend imprudently contrived sometimes to introduce her for a few fleeting hours. Under this impression, her mind became full of melancholy ideas, and a confirmed hatred of a monastic life. She had learned from the Abbess to whom she owed her introduction to that convent; and from the nurse, who had sometimes been allowed to see her, she discovered that Montreville was her father. From her too she procured his address, and immediately wrote to state her extreme abhorrence of a conventual life, soliciting a removal from her present residence, and asserting her readiness to earn her own livelihood by any means her father should point out. The perplexity of Mr. Montreville (now Sir Charles) was very great; and, unable to decide how to act, he neglected the letter altogether, hoping that the troublesome whim, which had seized Bertha's head,

could be only temporary. Repeated letters, however, each more earnest, more pressing, more pathetic than the last, at length roused him, and he wrote to the Abbess upon the subject, exhorting her to watch strictly over the young lady, whose disposition seemed to promise some trouble. The Abbess, enraged at Bertha's contumacy, injudiciously punished instead of conciliating; and the unhappy girl, through her constant friend, found means to inform Sir Charles; who, foreseeing an advantage (in which, however, Bertha had no share) immediately formed a plan to send his hated nephew from his country and his friends, and this scheme involved a very complicated one.

CHAPTER IX.

As much of the foregoing narrative as was necessary to be known Sir Charles repeated to Castleton Montreville; and shewing him several of Bertha's letters, which did indeed bespeak a most decided horror of becoming a nun, he appealed to the compassionate nature of his nephew, and besought him to become the friend of the distressed novice. "I feared to write again to the Abbess," continued Sir Charles, "lest she should again subject the poor girl to punishment, and give her a still greater dread of that fate, which I fear only personal exertions can revoke. It was to consult your father that I made so hasty and unexpected a journey into Derbyshire; and, in consequence of his advice, I intended to have gone myself over to Flanders: but vain are the intentions of man! I am extended on the bed of death, and unless you relieve my anxiety,

my dear nephew, I shall die wretched, in the idea that my unhappy child may, perhaps, be driven by despair to forfeit her eternal soul. Ravenscroft, though affectionately eager to add to my comfort by every means in his power, wants the abilities you eminently possess, to qualify him for such an undertaking. His knowledge of the French language is too circumscribed for a mission of such importance—important at least to me and Bertha de Rosemont. Yet if, indeed, I ask too much—if you cannot prevail on yourself to comfort at once the living and the dying ——"

Castleton was almost subdued; but unwilling, as Coventry was on the spot, to proceed without his advice and approbation, only promised his uncle that he would endeavour to act in conformity to his wishes, and withdrew at once to consult his friend, leaving Sir Charles to that repose, which his exhausted frame required after so much exertion.

Castleton found his friend walking alone in the garden, and immediately entered upon the recital he had just attended to—

one moment declaring that nothing should induce him to quit Julia and his country, even for a few weeks; and the next asking for that advice he seemed pre-determined not to take. "Why," said he indignantly, "why should I pay the price of my uncle's follies, or wander abroad to relieve a distressed damsel, who, I dare swear, inheriting her mother's levity and her father's love of forbidden pleasures, sighs for liberty only to abuse it? What is Bertha de Rosemont to me? No, I cannot go—I will not—let him send the heir. Perhaps he might marry the girl, and so save her from disgrace. Coventry, what shall I do?"

"Nay, how can I advise, when you have already made up your mind? If you will be guided by me, you will make the last moments of your uncle easy by a compliance with his wishes, as indeed you have half promised. You know that some time must yet elapse before Julia can be your wife. Why must you necessarily pass it wholly with her? You are mutually secure of each other's affection. She has not, I am certain, a single doubt of your fidelity in

any situation; and I trust that you have an equal reliance on her. This business may be useful to an unhappy woman—of whom, by the by, you have no right to form so harsh an opinion—and will, I should imagine, help away not unpleasantly the time, which would otherwise be passed continually in sameness. Yes, yes, I understand your looks—sameness in such society can never be satiety. Perhaps not. However, my advice is that you go. Give me a letter for my sister; which I will carry to her, and which, I am sure, she will answer in the same language as I have done. I can be of no use here, and I shall be a rapid messenger to Julia."

"But I cannot delay my final answer to Sir Charles till I hear Julia's opinion, if I mean to give him the relief he asks; for he cannot live till your return."

"Depend upon it," replied Coventry, Julia's opinion may be safely supposed, or I am mistaken in the genuine goodness and sensibility of her heart. As to my return, you are aware, my dear Montreville, I would not hesitate, could I do you any

good by returning; but now, do be considerate, and recollect how anxious I am to follow Almeria to London; not because I have any more doubt of her stability or propriety of conduct, than I have of Julia's; but Rosenthwaite is by no means correct, either in his own conduct, or in those, whom he introduces to his house. Almeria has no mother, and the old lady, who presides at her father's, is not qualified, in my opinion, for the office. Do not think me unfeeling, my dear fellow; but as propriety and custom do not dictate so long an observance of their dues, as in your situation is necessary, I shall remove Almeria, as soon as possible, from scenes which I neither approve, nor feel comfortable to know she is engaged in. Julia is very differently placed."

Coventry had to urge many more arguments, ere he could convince Montreville of the propriety of a measure he so thoroughly disliked. "I may go," said he at last, "but I cannot be convinced of the necessity of doing so. I know not why I feel a foreboding so heavy, whenever I think of this

journey. I know not why the hated form of Ravenscroft floats before my eyes, as portentous of evil to me—yet so it is."

"Merely because you are prejudiced against him. Yet so am I; but I see nothing in him worse than a thick-headed mercenary fool, who would, perhaps, be wicked if he knew how. As to any evil happening through him, I am sure he has not wit enough to form a plot, or contrivance enough to carry one on. Do not call in superstition as an auxiliary to your repugnance at performing this service. Write to my sister, and I will set out with the letter to-morrow. You cannot leave England till Sir Charles is actually dead; and if Julia's answer should incline to your opinion rather than to mine, I will agree as to your resignation of the errand to Ravenscroft."

A summons from Sir Charles broke up this conference; and Castleton, instantly obeying it, found him nearly in the last extremity. Eagerly he demanded his nephew's determination, and so entirely did the comfort of his last moments seem to depend on its being affirmative, that Castleton gave a

slow and reluctant promise to fulfil his wishes, unless Julia herself should disapprove. "But immediately," murmured Sir Charles in a faint tone. "She is nearly eighteen, the age which—Oh! promise me, immediately!"

He made a faint effort to raise himself, and looked with such anxious enquiry at his nephew, that the latter could not withhold a promise to lose no time—a measure which indeed his own wishes prompted. Sir Charles attempted to smile and thank him, but the effort failed in a last convulsion. He grasped Castleton's hand with all his remaining strength, and expired.

Castleton did not affect a sorrow, which it was improbable that he should feel; but, leaving Ravenscroft to the indulgence of a noisy and tumultuous lamentation on his own irreparable loss, convinced at the same time that sincerity had no part in such expressions, he himself again sought Coventry, and once more debated with him the necessity or propriety of the dreaded voyage to Flanders. This debate, however, contained nothing new, and only more decidedly

fixed the whole affair. Coventry was impatient to be gone; and Castleton, who thought the occasion would justify a deviation from common rules, was extremely desirous of going with him, that he might rather trust his fate (since, after all, Julia's decision would be definitive) to a personal discussion than to a letter. But a little reasoning convinced him that such a proceeding would be indelicate, and that however little affection might be owing to his uncle, respect was certainly due to his memory. He retired, therefore, to write, unwillingly consenting that Coventry should depart on the following day. Ravenscroft obliged them by his absence, and shut himself up in his own chamber, for purposes best known to himself; into which, so long as his seclusion left the friends at liberty, they did not think proper to inquire. In spite of every endeavour to the contrary, Castleton, or we should now say *Sir* Castleton, betrayed the most extreme agitation and reluctance at parting with his friend. "I feel assured," said he, "that this separation, if not eternal, will be the end of

happiness to me, and of that regard, on your part, which now makes so large a part of it. As to your sister, I cannot describe my sensations in speaking or thinking of her. I doubt not her constancy—I am assured of my own; but yet—oh Coventry, I comply with this cruel requisition—I undertake this fatal mission; but I feel that, in so doing, I am sacrificing my own felicity, and I give way to an irresistible impulse, which hurries me along in spite of my better judgment. The hand of Fate impels me, and I go; but I shall return no more to peace."

"How shall I combat such determined prejudice?" replied Mr. Coventry: "I have already exhausted all my stock of rhetoric, and must now refer you to my sister, whom you have made the final arbitress in this matter, and whose opinion I faithfully promise not to influence in any way. You will return in a few weeks, my dear friend, to laugh with me at these childish presentiments, and to enjoy the reflection of having preserved an unhappy young woman from a fate, which she seems so much to dread.

You will rejoice in the smiles of your Julia, blended as they will then be with love and approbation; and the praises of her, whom you love, will mingle with the blessings of her, whom you will have saved from misery. Turn your eyes then, my dear Montreville, from a prospect you obstinately darken, to admit those rays of hope and anticipation, which ought to brighten the scene. As to your proposal of going with me, it is only an unnecessary waste of time, since to cross from Cornwall into Derbyshire must detain you, and your object is dispatch. By the time the deceased is consigned to his tomb you will have received Julia's answer to your letter; and I should recommend immediate preparations to be made. Would you not wish for Marriot to be sent to you? He may be Julia's messenger. I shall be obliged to take Burnet back with me."

Marriot was Sir Castleton's favorite and confidential servant, who had only been left behind in order to expedite the workmen, and see that his master's orders were obeyed at the Manor. Castleton gladly agreed to receive Julia's letter by his hands,

and wrote to him fully on such subjects as related to the business going on at home. The friends parted with depressed spirits, and though Coventry's grew lighter as he drew towards home, Sir Castleton's sunk to the lowest melancholy; nor could all his endeavours to rally them, and shake off his dismal forebodings, avail him any thing. He passed a week of complete wretchedness; and then received his expected letter from Julia, not by the hands of his faithful Marriot, but by a servant of Mr. Coventry.

CHAPTER X.

JULIA's surprise at Coventry's return, unaccompanied by Sir Castleton Montreville, was converted into vexation when she learned the circumstances which detained him in Cornwall, and, like himself, a sad yet indefinable foreboding came over her mind. She retired to read the following letter, whilst her brother hastened to Castleton Manor, there to expedite Marriot's preparations for joining his master.

"Do you remember, my Julia, the sad images of future evil which, vague and unembodied, floated before our mind's eye when lately we parted? Those indefinable shapes of ill have now assumed a tangible form, and beckon me to sorrow. I cannot recapitulate all the history of my uncle's errors, for which, unless you forbid it, I am to do penance. Coventry will repeat to you the disgraceful tale, and it then remains with you to decide whether I am to return immediately to you

and happiness, or become a gloomy and lonely wanderer in search of sorrow. Weigh well the matter ere you do decide, for I feel something awfully prophetic that on your decision depends the good or ill of my future days. Oh, beloved Julia! Let your heart—let love—let the remembrance of me influence you in this important moment. I cannot hide from myself that reason is not on my side, and that mere presentiment ought not perhaps to overbalance her voice. But *I* have nothing to do with reason—I acknowledge it. I can only feel, and that so keenly, that I am sometimes not myself. Beware, then, of hasty judgment—think well ere you send forth the *fiat* on which I have promised to depend; and remember how much——but I ought not thus to fetter the reason of my judge. What, however, what, my Julia, can this Bertha de Rosemont ever be to me, that I must thus relinquish my happiness to promote hers? In fact, shall I promote it? Will her liberation from monastic vows, her introduction to a world which proved fatal to her mother, conduce to her peace? I cannot believe it: yet I own I have no right to choose for her the

way of life which might hereafter prove the most desirable; she must, upon that point, fix for herself. I only wish that I had not been selected to effect her deliverance from the gloomy walls, which confine her against her will. But ever remember, Julia, that whatever Bertha de Rosemont may be—wherever fate may conduct her, or me—she can never be otherwise than indifferent to me. The only effect of the greatest charms in her could be to render her less hateful. She is my evil genius, for she tears me from you, and breaks in upon those blissful enjoyments which are only to be found by me in your society. Alas! Perhaps the happy past may have been only a delicious vision, which the future will violently disturb, and but too probably disperse for ever. I have written much, Julia, but I have said little—scarcely any thing that I intended. I cannot methodize my thoughts, I cannot vary my subject. One idea alone engrosses my every feeling. I can think of nothing but your answer; and hope scarcely gilds the gloom with one feeble ray as I anticipate its purport. Yet can you banish me, Julia? Can you send me a wanderer on an

errand in which my heart has no share, and to distant lands, whence I may never return? Oh, if indeed such be your barbarous mandate—if I may no more live in your smiles—to be cheered by your voice, or sustained by your love—may you yet be happy! And if to think of me conveys one pang to that dear bosom, may my remembrance be banished with my form!—How wrong this is!—How weak I am!—I feel it. I can, however, write in no other strain, and to relieve you will conclude. You will rather catch my meaning from your own heart, than read it here. On you depends our fate. Adieu, beloved Julia! Oh Heaven! How long, how much, does that adieu include? I dare not think!

"Castleton Montreville."

Miss Coventry to Sir C. Montreville.

"In making me the arbitress of your fate and my own, dearest Montreville, you must be aware how highly you have bribed my decision, and how impossible it is that I can dispassionately argue on a case which (as you

seem to think) involves so much the future happiness of each. You are not now to learn how completely my peace is entwined with your's; and this consideration will, I hope, convince you how very reluctantly I confess my opinion; that, painful as even a temporary separation is to us both, you ought to fulfil the hopes which you certainly, by my brother's account, held out to your uncle, and go immediately to the relief of the lady in question. Born and educated in a different persuasion, I cannot connect the ideas of happiness and a convent, nor do I wonder at Mademoiselle de Rosemont's antipathy to one. Nature seems to shudder over a sacrifice so barbarous; and could I know hereafter, that a selfish objection to relinquish a present portion of my own felicity in your presence had been the means of immolating an innocent and unhappy victim at the shrine of superstition and bigotry, I should feel my comfort perpetually disturbed with the idea of her misery, and my own share in it. Why, my dear friend, why should you suffer imagination thus to afflict and alarm you? What is there in a voyage to Flanders so terrific? I acknowledge my wish that I

could just now debate the matter with you personally; for arguments appear so much more cool and unfeeling on paper, than when accompanied by the tenderness, which love or friendship would inspire. But indeed, Montreville, I do not feel on this occasion so cool as I am obliged to appear in style. I would not wish you to know how much I am distressed at the prospect of your leaving us so long; for as to this separation involving more than a few weeks, I cannot, will not admit the dreadful idea. You will return to England and to me with added satisfaction, in the consciousness of having done an acceptable duty, and an incalculable good to a young person who, but for you, perhaps might be eternally wretched. You cannot doubt my constancy—you cannot question my affection. Were you to remain near me, I could not with propriety yet become your wife. A short time, and the interdict which a daughter's regret and affection impose, will be removed. Situated as we are, who, but for that sad event which filial love deplores had even now been indissolubly united, affectation on my part would be doubly impertinent; and I do not hesitate to acknow-

ledge that I am ready to become your wife, whenever you return to claim me. I look forward to that day as the one, which will establish the happiness of both; and its felicity will be heightened by the reflection that no duty has been sacrificed to obtain it—no heart broken to hasten its arrival. Go then, dear Montreville, where humanity so dictatorially calls. You will carry with you my entire love, confidence, and approbation. Of Bertha de Roscmont, whatever may be her attractions, I entertain no jealous fears; and this security arises not from any vanity in my mind, but a conviction that your affection for me is founded on a more durable basis than mere personal charms—on your approbation of my character, and a knowledge of that heart which, fully appreciating yours, beats for you alone, and for ever. I am sorry that Marriot is unable to accompany you, because you are attached to his services; but otherwise I think, with my father, that a young man who could speak the language, and possessed some information as to foreign manners and customs, is desirable. I send you Selima: you will value the faithful creature because she was mine.

I have a high opinion of her sagacity and courage.—I suspect that my letter, like your own, is somewhat incoherent. Oh, how much has it cost me to write it! I long to unsay all I have said that may appear to you as being *too reasonable*:—but in bidding you farewel, I too make reason give way wholly to feeling. My ardent prayers for your health, your safety, your speedy return, are incessantly offered up to Heaven. In your welfare, your happiness, the peace of Julia is involved. I dare not write longer, lest I should overturn my own arguments, and bid you return. Weak and selfish that I am! Would I, then, sacrifice to continual misery an innocent heart, to spare mine a present pang? Oh, no! Severe as it is, my sorrow will, I fervently trust, be but temporary—her's, if by me deprived of instant succour, would be lasting. Go speedily then, most dear Montreville, that your return may sooner restore peace and comfort to the faithful and ardently attached heart of your

"Julia Coventry."

CHAPTER XI.

Before the arrival of this letter, and one from Mr. George Coventry, the remains of the late Baronet had been committed to the earth, and Sir Castleton had listened to that clause in his uncle's will, which related to his daughter. This added another reason for his personal exertions in her favor to those, which already subsisted. "I bequeath to my dear nephew Castleton Montreville, heir to my title and the estates thereunto annexed, (thus ran the clause above-mentioned) the sum of five thousand pounds as a mark of my regard, unfettered by any conditions; and I farther leave in the hands of the said Castleton Montreville the sum of ten thousand pounds on the following conditions; viz. that he shall go immediately into Flanders, to the convent of the Conception, at Courtray, and liberate from the said convent Bertha de Rosemont, my illegitimate daughter, now a noviciate there against her own consent and my wishes. Should the

said Bertha de Rosemont be free to leave the convent, the above-mentioned sum of ten thousand pounds is to be her portion, with liberty to dispose of it as she pleases, and to reside wherever she prefers. If, however, my reprehensible delay should have unfortunately deprived her of the power to quit her convent, or any newly-formed wish to remain there should then influence her mind, I bequeath to my said nephew Castleton Montreville the sum of eight thousand pounds out of the ten at present intended for Bertha de Rosemont, the remaining two thousand to be given, as a present, to the convent of which she will be a member. If circumstances should induce my nephew Castleton Montreville to change his kind determination of going himself to the relief of my daughter, and he should be desirous of delegating to another this office of humanity, it is to my other nephew Charles Ravenscroft Montreville that I desire such office may be resigned, who will gladly undertake it on the same conditions."

For some minutes after hearing this part of his uncle's will, Sir Castleton fluctuated in his own mind whether he should himself

be the deliverer of Bertha from her unwilling thraldom, or whether he should indeed allow Ravenscroft to go in his stead. He turned his eyes fixedly on his cousin, and half ventured the proposal; but cunning, avarice, selfishness, were the predominant emotions to be traced in that usually vacant countenance. Castleton fancied he read in Ravenscroft's features a resolution of abandoning Bertha to her fate, and appropriating to his own use that money, which was intended for her's. Nothing, he well knew, could be easier. It was but loitering away in Cornwall or in Flanders that time, which yet intervened between Bertha and her final immolation; and the fatal vows once pronounced were irrevocable, unless broken by guilt or perjury. An expression of deep and latent cunning, an ill-disguised pleasure at the probable success of certain self-laid schemes, brightened the dull eyes of Ravenscroft at the slight hint, rather than actual proposal, which escaped the lips of Sir Castleton, and again he wavered, and was silent. Ravenscroft was, as Mrs. Giffard had said, "too great a fool to be a proper knave," and he betrayed his unprin-

cipled intentions almost without a word. Avarice was his ruling passion, as Sir Castleton well knew; and eight thousand pounds were no mean *douceur* for acting like a rascal. Sir Castleton, however, penetrated the character and views of his cousin, and explained himself no farther; but shutting himself into his own apartment, endeavoured to bring his mind to that long separation from Julia, which seemed irremediable. His heart was too good to suffer him to enjoy happiness even in her society, if, through a selfish negligence of the duty thus assigned to him, another was doomed to a wretched imprisonment for life; and whether he delegated that task to Ravenscroft, or himself delayed the execution of it, he was equally accessary to so cruel a sacrifice. Julia's letter interrupted a train of ideas of this nature, and though before it arrived he had hoped and wished that her opinions, her arguments, might strengthen his, and prompt him to the performance of this task, yet when he first found that they did so, he passionately accused her of cruelty, of indifference, of a carelessness as to his happiness, and even of a preference for some other. A

short time cured him of so preposterous a folly; and a second and third perusal of her letter dispelled the mist of passion, which anger and disappointment had raised. He acknowledged, though most unwillingly, that Julia was right; and growing more and more reasonable, he at length resolutely formed his plans. Since he must go, he determined to lose no time in useless lingering, but speedily depart, that he might the more speedily return. "If," sighed he, "I ever do return to happiness and love—of that I dare not think."

Ravenscroft's disappointed looks, when he found that Sir Castleton decided to go, convinced him that he had frustrated some deep laid scheme, and urged him to be still more expeditious; teaching him, at the same time, to be as little communicative as circumstances allowed. The absence of Marriot on this occasion was particularly distressing to Sir Castleton; for notwithstanding his ignorance of any other language than his own, and of all foreign customs, his fidelity and warm attachment to his master made his attendance very desirable. However, against sickness he

could not argue or contend, and he found it necessary to look round him for some one, whom he could approve as a temporary substitute for Marriot. Suspicious of every word and action on the part of Ravenscroft, he obstinately refused every plan and every person proposed by him; nay, believing all the servants, who offered from that neighbourhood, to be sent or tutored by his cousin, he, at length, determined on proceeding to Penzance, where he had, with great difficulty, secured a vessel to land him at Ostend. At Penzance he meant to inquire for a footman, and if unable to procure one there, he resolved on trusting to chance for supplying the want in Flanders. He once thought of detaining the man, whom George Coventry had sent to him instead of Marriot; but this servant belonged exclusively to the elder Mr. Coventry, and dared not remain, though equally willing to do so, and qualified for the situation. Sir Castleton, indeed, thought the old gentleman might have offered the attendance of his man, till he recollected that Mr. Coventry seldom sacrificed his own comforts to promote those of others. A day or two

previous to his departure, Mr. Montreville, (as Ravenscroft may now be styled) who had till this time been a self-invited guest at Montreville House, broke in upon the solitude, to which Sir Castleton had condemned himself (principally with a view of being free from the irksome society of a man whom he could not send away), to announce his intended removal; to thank the young Baronet for those attentions which he was very conscious he had never paid; and to recommend, in very warm terms, a young man who had just arrived from Flanders with a gentleman whom he had attended there, and who was very desirous of going immediately back again in the capacity of Sir Castleton's valet. To this courteous recommendation the suspicious Baronet returned as courteous a denial; and thanking his cousin with cold politeness for the trouble he had taken, informed him that he had already laid all his plans, and that a servant now waited his embarkation. Montreville's countenance underwent a slight change from smiles to chagrin; and Sir Castleton, who, in every look of that young man fancied he read a clumsy plot, con-

gratulated himself on the contrivance, which had silenced him on this subject. Mutual polite speeches then passed between the gentlemen, who would not probably meet again before Sir Castleton's departure, as Mr. Montreville was immediately going to leave Cornwall. His absence left Sir Castleton wholly at liberty to settle his household during his sojournment abroad, Montreville House having become his property, as heir to the title. He also made a final disposition of every part of those possessions which were exclusively his own, as if he were never to return and enjoy them himself. Under this gloomy persuasion he acted throughout his arrangements. Marriot and his family were settled at Castleton Manor till his return, or his death; and having written fully to this worthy servant, to Coventry, and to Julia, he prepared, with a sad and heavy heart, for his immediate journey to Penzance.

CHAPTER XII.

The morning before Sir Castleton Montreville's departure, he was sitting gloomily immersed in a train of most unpleasant meditations. The weather was unusually chill for September; and by the light of a dull fire, over which he leaned, he was tracing the beloved features of Julia in a miniature, which she had given him. The noise of a carriage driving up the paved court disturbed, and by no means pleased him; and he issued softly forth from his dressing-room to forbid the admission of strangers, when he suddenly found himself opposite to Mrs. Giffard. A sensation of pleasure, which he believed himself incapable of, thrilled through his breast at this unexpected meeting; for his heart, though more fondly devoted to another, had never forgotten to beat, with a feeling something warmer than mere friendship, for his early love. He kissed her hand in silence, and led her into the dressing-room,

" You must be uncommonly surprised to see me here," said Mrs. Giffard, refusing the chair he offered.

" I am at least equally delighted," replied the Baronet, " but I know not how far I may be grateful, since I know not whether it was to visit me that you came hither."

" Yes, indeed, was it," answered she: " I am accompanied by a gentleman too, who is very desirous of becoming known to you, and enquiring in what way he can be useful to you during your absence from England. Mr. Giffard waits your invitation to advance."

Sir Castleton immediately accompanied Mrs. Giffard down stairs, where, mutual introductions having taken place, they again ascended to the only comfortable apartment; and smiles returned to the pensive countenance of their host, who, in compliment to his guests, delayed the prosecution of his journey another day.

" It was by mere accident that we heard you were on the point of leaving England," said Mrs. Giffard, " and the reason of your so doing appeared to me so singular that I could not be easy till I had ascertained its

truth. Knowing that in this part of the world, at least, you were but little acquainted, notwithstanding your situation in it, Mr. Giffard had an idea that we might be useful to you, and, by becoming guardians of your property here, prevent others from exercising any authority which, on the plea of relationship, we feared might be the case."

"Your visit, and Mr. Giffard's kindness, give me an opportunity of leaving every thing as I could wish during my enforced absence," replied Sir Castleton. "As Mr. Giffard is a professional man, and one in whom I can place implicit confidence, I shall immediately take advantage of that circumstance, and place in his hands every writing of consequence, which will relieve my mind of an intolerable weight; for so little do I know any one about me, and so great appears to be the influence of Mr. Montreville with all descriptions of people (though *why* I am at a loss to imagine), that I hardly felt inclined to place any affairs of importance in their hands. Now I can adjust every thing satisfactorily as to pecuniary concerns, and the management of my property."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Giffard, "you talk as if you were going for many years instead of a few weeks. The management of your property will probably only extend to the preservation of your game, and the proper watching of your mines,—for that your steward will be amply sufficient. As to your papers, I think you right in placing them with me, since you honour me with your confidence. I know little of the people here, but I do know that Montreville has not only contrived to secure great popularity himself amongst them, but has considerably lessened your chance for it. It was this knowledge, which principally induced me to come over; for I——"

"Well, well," interrupted Mrs. Giffard, "here you are, and any benefit, that may accrue to Sir Castleton from your coming, will give us both pleasure. We don't like Ravenscroft, but he may not be all we think him, and certainly we are rather prejudiced judges."

Every arrangement was quickly made between Sir Castleton and Mr. Giffard, who consented also to become the temporary master of those domains during the Baronet's absence, though not actually resident there;

such a circumstance being incompatible with his situation as a solicitor of great eminence, and intending in a few months to remove to London.

It was in consequence of some reports as to the behaviour of Mr. Montreville, and his exulting triumph at having so cleverly banished the new Baronet immediately upon his entering the county, that Mr. and Mrs. Giffard had been induced to take this journey. Sir Castleton absent, Mr. Montreville looked upon the premises as his own for a time, supposing that his cousin would only leave them in the care of servants, or of the old steward, who was entirely devoted to himself. Unable to comprehend the business which thus carried Sir Castleton from England, at the very time when he first obtained a more extensive consequence in it, and fearing that Ravenscroft might indeed have fabricated some plot to be rid of one who stood between him and the title (for in default of an heir in the male line it was to pass to the female), Mr. Giffard, at the request of his wife, went to ascertain, in person, the truth. When, however, all the circumstances attending the

business were made known to him—the narrative of the late Baronet—the promise extorted from his nephew—the clause in the will relative to his daughter—when all this was explained, Mr. Giffard still believed that some scheme was at the bottom of it; but unable to ascertain the reality of such belief, and fearful of doing mischief by exciting such suspicions as might prevent Sir Castleton's compliance with a promise, which, under certain circumstances, became sacred, he buried these ideas in his own breast, and turned his attention to the safety and security of that property, which Montreville had threatened to invade. At the same time discovering that Sir Castleton was not unsuspicious, though he himself was unable to give a reason for such doubts, Mr. Giffard gave a few general hints relative to the necessity of guarding against such a character as Montreville bore; and advised the Baronet that if Mademoiselle de Rosemont had, by any accident, quitted the convent in which she had been educated for any other, or in any way had changed her mind, he should return immediately to England, nor be in-

duced to prosecute his Quixotic researches any farther, Mr. Giffard believing that *his* part of the business was performed, by going on such an errand to the place where her father supposed her to be. These instructions Sir Castleton promised to observe, convinced that some strange doubts in the mind of Mr. Giffard had prompted them, and still more depressed by the idea, though he concealed it from observation; for feeling, as he himself did, an indefinable suspicion of Montreville, and some secret machinations, it was natural enough that his dread should be increased upon seeing that another had imbibed the same idea. He had, however, gone too far to recede,' and every thing he heard of Mr. Montreville served to convince him that, in his hands, Bertha's interest would be made subservient to his own.

At length he bade adieu to Mrs. Giffard, her husband having kindly offered to accompany him to Penzance. As he pressed her hand for the last time to his lips, he besought her to vindicate his name from any aspersions Montreville might affix to it, which in any way could reach the ears of Julia to his pre-

judice. "As to the opinion of the people here," said he, "I own myself indifferent to it; but though I believe it difficult to change the tenor of her thoughts towards me, it is not impossible that it may be attempted, and I at such a distance—Oh, Maria! It is in vain that I endeavour to shake off this unmanly weakness, and persuade myself of my return. I shall either return no more, or I shall come home to find every happy expectation blasted. Don't ask me why I feel thus—I am ashamed to say I can give you only a true woman's reason—because I do. A fatal necessity drives me from happiness, of which the same cruel and arbitrary fate will deprive me."

"Against such a doctrine as that which you seem to have adopted, my dear friend, there is no arguing," replied Mrs. Giffard, "I am, however, grieved that you should so far have departed from the native energy of your character as to become a fatalist. Such a weakness will continually produce the evils you dread, by depriving you of the power and inclination of trying to prevent them. It is very unlikely that any one should endeavour, or wish to injure you in the opinion of Miss

Coventry—it is equally improbable that she should be influenced by any such attempts, if really made. If she could, she is unworthy of you. But your spirits are vexed and depressed by your unexpected removal from your country and your friends, in search of you know not what. I shall hear from you. You will abjure your present absurd anticipations, and you will soon return to acknowledge your folly, and laugh with Julia at such frightful phantoms. Adieu! My best, my most friendly wishes for your health, happiness, and safety attend you! I see that Mr. Giffard waits for you below, and your Julia's *huge* present, the formidable Selima, is looking for you."

Sir Castleton bade adieu to this ever-dear friend, and, without trusting himself with a longer conversation, joined Mr. Giffard; then, accompanied by that gentleman's servant, and "Julia's huge present," he took the road to Penzance, with a velocity which enforced silence.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sir Castleton's first care, on arriving at Penzance, was to enquire of the landlord of the principal inn for a servant who might suit him, and was willing to attend him abroad. Of such a one, however, he could hear nothing, and the landlord seemed to think that he had a very indifferent chance of procuring one at so short a notice. The wind did not serve, nor was the vessel which the Baronet had engaged quite ready:—he had, therefore, a few hours at least which he could employ in endeavours to hear of a servant. He was in earnest conversation with Mr. Giffard on this subject, when the landlord entered, introducing a young man of steady and sedate appearance, who was willing to go abroad. Sir Castleton involuntarily asked him if he knew Mr. Montreville, or had ever before been out of England. To these questions the man answered in the negative, and replied very satisfactorily to every other. He

spoke French very well, and named a family of great respectability with whom he had lived, and to whom he lamented there was not time to apply for a character. His appearance was so much in his favor, that, fastidious as Sir Castleton was, he could form no reasonable objection to Gilbert, and he was accordingly engaged, to the satisfaction of Mr. Giffard, who could not bear the thoughts of the Baronet's going unattended, and could ill spare his own servant.

This matter settled, Sir Castleton beheld with a sort of sad and gloomy satisfaction the wind changing to the desired point, and retired to trace a few lines to Miss Coventry, which Mr. Giffard promised to deliver to her himself, certain that it would give her pleasure to hear of her lover by one, who had seen him during the last moments which he had passed on his native shores. Poor Julia was indeed, almost equally with her unhappy lover, an object of compassion, since the separation was equally afflicting. Severe had been the conflict in her breast, before she could persuade herself to write, as she had done, to Sir Castleton on the subject. Like himself, she

cherished sad doubts and forebodings, and fancied the happiest hours of her life were passed: but, determined not to increase his wretchedness by an exposure of her own, she checked those sorrowful expressions, which she was every moment ready to commit to paper, and rather endeavoured, by feigned cheerfulness and warm hopes, to banish the despondency so evidently oppressive to his soul. Mr. Coventry had no great share of feeling for any one, nor was he the person, whom she would have selected to converse with on the subject of her fears and sorrows. Mr. Coventry, cold and ambitious, treated such feelings with derision, contemptuously enquiring what was to happen to the dear youth, and why he was to be entombed by the ocean, or eaten by monsters, more certainly than any other. Almeria, had she been there, was too happy herself, and too careless by nature, to enter with much interest into the feelings of others—and George, the only one to whom she could have spoken confidentially, had departed for London, as soon as he had settled every thing with Marriot respecting his management at the Manor. He had not

thought it necessary to explain to Sir Castleton his whole intentions, for he feared it might augment his own regrets; but a part of his plan was to make Almeria immediately his wife, as the only way of withdrawing her from a situation which he by no means approved.

Mr. Rosenthwaite was a libertine in its fullest extent; and though he allowed his daughter's presence somewhat to check the introduction of improper visitors at his house, she could not wholly succeed in so doing, whilst the known profligacy of her father prevented many families of character and consequence from noticing her, who would willingly have done so under other circumstances.

Julia thus obliged to brood over evils which then, at least, were only imaginary, had no comfort but in writing to Sir Castleton, and anticipating the letters which she felt certain of receiving by every opportunity from him. To see Mr. Giffard, to ask him a thousand questions, and hear every particular which love rendered interesting, would necessarily be very delightful; and had she known such a pleasure was in store for her, most anxiously would she have counted the hours till it arrived. When

that time did actually arrive, and the Giffards introduced themselves at Ashborn Abbey as the friends of Sir Castleton Montreville, and as having parted from him so recently, how eagerly did she question them, and how attentively did she listen to the transactions of the last hours, which yet beheld him an inhabitant of *terra firma!* Mr. Giffard practised the same honest deception which Julia had herself done, and with more effect, describing the Baronet as tranquillized by her brighter anticipations, and eager to proceed on his voyage, in order that he might speedily return. Julia was soothed by this kind representation, and Sir Castleton's last letter assisted the delusion. To him we now return.

He had nearly concluded his letter, and was lost in profound thought, when the landlord announced a gentleman, who particularly wished to speak with him on urgent business. Sir Castleton, vexed and irritable at being disturbed, sent his excuses to the gentleman, and refused to see him. A second request, however, for admission, with a most polite apology for persevering in so importunate a desire, extremely well expressed in a note, prevailed;

and Sir Castleton descended to the parlour, where sat a very interesting, genteel young man. He rose when the Baronet entered, seemed a good deal confused, and hesitated in what manner to make known the business which had caused so singular an application. His note was signed "W. Bingley," and by that name Sir Castleton addressed him, requesting to know how he was concerned in the affair Mr. Bingley alluded to, or whether he could have the pleasure of being serviceable to him.

"I am aware, Sir," replied Mr. Bingley, "that my appearance here, and my importunate application to you, must seem very impertinent; but I trust that, even if you are not enabled to grant my petition, you will kindly forgive my making my situation known to you."

Sir Castleton bowed and wondered, but was silent. "I am, Sir," resumed Mr. Bingley, "a junior partner in a mercantile house of the first consequence in London, and came hither a few days since to transact some business. I had nearly concluded it, and proposed returning to town in a day or two, but this morning

I received an order from our principal, by the hands of a confidential clerk, to proceed immediately to Antwerp, for the purpose of relieving a commercial concern there, with which our's is largely connected, and which would deeply involve us, as well as many others, in its failure. To cross so large a part of the kingdom to the regular port is attended with great loss of time, and to me a day may be of consequence. I enquired immediately after a vessel sailing from this place, but could hear of none, except the one exclusively belonging to yourself. Having said thus much, Sir, my presuming request becomes apparent—that you would allow me to intrude so far as to be allowed a passage in your vessel. The obligation will be incalculable, and most gratefully acknowledged by our house. At the same time I own that it may be extremely inconvenient and unpleasant for you to grant my request. If such be the case, I beg, Sir, that you will not allow any consideration or delicacy towards a perfect stranger to operate. You are certainly the best judge as to the propriety of conferring so great an obligation."

Mr. Bingley concluded, and Sir Castleton, who was greatly pleased with his appearance and manners, readily granted the accommodation, which he could hardly, indeed, be so churlish as to refuse.

"To any service my vessel can afford you, Sir," said the Baronet, "you are perfectly welcome. I shall myself land at Ostend, and from that place, in all probability, you may procure an immediate conveyance. I am glad to observe that the wind is blowing fair for our voyage; and as a brisk breeze is springing up, I shall be much obliged if you will order your baggage to be taken on board as soon as possible, for it is equally my wish, as your's, to use dispatch. I should like to sail this evening."

With a profusion of thanks Mr. Bingley took his leave, and withdrew to make every arrangement as quickly as possible. Sir Castleton then sought Mr. Giffard, to enquire what he thought of this affair, and whether he approved of his compliance. Mr. Giffard congratulated his friend on the acquisition of a pleasant and gentlemanly companion, such as he described Bingley; and observed,

that he could scarcely have reconciled it to his conscience to have acted otherwise. Mr. Bingley's manner the Baronet described as very respectful, without the least appearance of servility; his countenance open, and promising a lively and intelligent mind; and Mr. Giffard really rejoiced that the melancholy Montreville was not condemned to a solitary voyage.

It was late in the evening when the sailors announced that every thing was ready. Mr. Bingley was already on board, and did not appear; while Gilbert, the new servant, was assiduously busied about his master. Gilbert expressed a great fear of the monstrous Newfoundland favourite of Sir Castleton, and would willingly have left her behind; but Selima and her master were equally careful not to be parted. On this being so absolutely fixed, Mr. Giffard traced a dark frown on the brow of Gilbert, which he could not understand, but which did not please him. Sir Castleton, however, did not observe it, and Mr. Giffard by no means wished to call his attention, or rouse any latent suspicions, which it was now too late to indulge.

A bright, unclouded moon lighted the silent friends to the beach. Sir Castleton sighed heavily; and raising his eyes, in tears, towards Heaven, invoked a fervent blessing on Julia. Then, pressing the hand of his sympathising friend, he attempted to thank him—to utter some of the many agonizing ideas which pressed on his mind—but the words died on his pale and quivering lips. Once more wringing the hand of Mr. Giffard, he hastily leapt into the boat, followed by Gilbert and Selima. He was quickly rowed to the vessel, which got immediately under weigh, and the dear shores of England receded from his view.

Mr. Giffard watched the vessel as long as it was visible, and then retraced his way to the inn, with a heart nearly as much oppressed as that of his friend. He passed the short remainder of the night in preparations for his journey back to Montreville House, where, having joined his wife, he put every thing in as good a train as he could. He discharged the old steward, of whom he and Sir Castleton had equally a bad opinion; and then going somewhat out of his way,

delivered to Miss Coventry the letter with which her lover had intrusted him, and proceeded to London, where he impatiently waited for some news of the melancholy traveller.

CHAPTER XIV.

For some hours after the two companions, Sir Castleton Montreville and Mr. Bingley, thus oddly assorted, were fairly launched upon the ocean, the Baronet shut himself in his cabin, reviewing, with sensations nearly amounting to agony, the strange and sudden transition from happiness to its complete reverse. Mr. Bingley did not intrude, but respectfully waited till the evidently painful agitation of his new acquaintance subsided. Sir Castleton's natural politeness induced him to make a violent effort at conquering his sadness; and, joining Mr. Bingley, he first apologized for his rudeness, and then endeavoured to assume a degree of cheerfulness, which he was still far from feeling. He found Bingley a very pleasant, well-informed man; and his exertions to amuse the Baronet made their voyage pass more agreeably than that melan-

choly young lover had believed possible. With Gilbert he was not quite so well satisfied, for he frequently appeared sullen and gloomy; nay, Sir Castleton fancied that he sometimes observed a sort of lurking observation, which seemed to him inquisitive and impertinent. Once he even thought that a look of intelligence was exchanged betwixt Gilbert and Mr. Bingley; but the idea seemed soon to himself absurd, and he blamed himself for suspicions, which reason could not justify.

Fair and pleasant gales made their little voyage quick and prosperous, and they landed at Ostend without check or adventure, where Mr. Bingley quitted Sir Castleton, with every demonstration of respect and grateful acknowledgment for himself and his partners. He immediately procured a conveyance to Antwerp; and Sir Castleton Montreville hastened to the best inn, not sorry to be once more alone, and at liberty to indulge reflection. He found Gilbert very alert and very useful; and observed, not without surprise, that his sullen, taciturn manner was now exchanged

for a satisfied, cheerful air. He made a remark upon this alteration to Gilbert, who acknowledged that he was always ill and low-spirited when on ship-board.

Sir Castleton earnestly looked at him.—"How!" said he, "I thought you told me that you had never been abroad? What means this? Surely I am not at last imposed upon!"

Gilbert coloured extremely, and stammered as he replied, that "he had, indeed, never been in Flanders before, but that he had once attended a gentleman to France."

It was too late to think of prudence in the choice of an attendant, and too ridiculous to part with a very active and useful one, through a vague suspicion of being deceived. Sir Castleton, therefore, determined to retain his servant at present, and watch him narrowly.

Weary alike in mind and body (for, like Gilbert, Sir Castleton did not feel himself so well on sea as on land), he remained one day at Ostend to recruit his health, and arrange his plans as well as he could, in a situation

and amongst people so entirely new. He found it, however, impossible to fix upon any line of conduct, uncertain as he was of a civil and accommodating reception from the lady Abbess, who, by his uncle's account, had seemed very unwilling to part with her young noviciate; uncertain also whether he should find Bertha de Rosemont still at that convent; whether she still retained the same eager desire of quitting a monastic life; or, seduced by arguments, and those artifices so well understood and practised in convents, or terrified by their threats and punishments, had consented quietly, if not willingly, to assume the veil.

He was glad to find amongst the letters committed to his care by Sir Charles, only some to a few old friends, recommending his nephew to their kindness, and one to Bertha—none to the Abbess; for he believed, had the old lady been informed of the *douceur* given to her convent in the event of Bertha's becoming a nun, that no means would be powerful enough, short of papal authority, to emancipate her. Of the introductory letters

he did not intend to avail himself, not wishing to remain an hour longer in a country, which contained nothing to interest him; scarcely, indeed, the business which brought him.—Determined not to be long detained at Courtray by any persuasions or contrivance of the Abbess, who might endeavour to effect her purpose by gaining time, he ordered only a small package of linen to be prepared; and leaving Gilbert to do this, with permission afterwards to amuse himself by a survey of the town, he sat down, with Selima at his feet, to address Julia and Mr. Giffard.

He was disturbed in his employment by the loud tones of Gilbert's voice in great merriment; and, going to the window, saw him in great apparent intimacy with Monsieur Brignolles, the landlord, whom he was entertaining very highly with some mirthful anecdote. Sir Castleton retreated from the window without having been perceived, and involuntarily every unpleasant suspicion, which he had harboured of this man, returned with additional force. He could not persuade himself that

Gilbert was so new to Flanders as he pretended; and, contrasting his sullen, silent demeanour on board the ship with his present mirth and loquacity, when not immediately in *his* presence, felt assured that one mode of conduct must be feigned to serve a purpose.—Ravenscroft, and his malignant scowl or fawning smile, came across Castleton's mind; but unable to imagine a motive for deception, he endeavoured once more to think himself deceived, and only determined to use greater expedition in the conclusion of the business, which had drawn him into a situation so uncomfortable, that he might dismiss Gilbert and care together on the dear shores of England.

He then finished his letters; and, refusing to part with his dog which Gilbert called away, on going to his chamber, he ordered horses to be ready at a very early hour in the morning; and then tried to lose in a short sleep the remembrance of the past, and the anticipations of the future, which no reasoning could make pleasant. He slept; but images of horror disturbed his fancy; and he willingly

roused himself from dreams of distress, that he might plunge into active employment, as the only means of partly shaking off oppressive thought.

CHAPTER XV.

As soon as Sir Castleton Montreville reached Courtray, and had secured comfortable accommodations at a farm house, which he preferred to the bustle of an inn, he dispatched a note by Gilbert to the lady Abbess, requesting, as a stranger, the honor of an interview the same evening. He feared that if he made his name known to the old lady, it might have awakened her suspicions of his business, and given her an opportunity of circumventing his designs. Gilbert accordingly had strict orders not to mention the name of his master.

The answer of the Abbess declined the honor of an interview that evening, both on account of the lateness of the hour, and her own indisposition, but named an early hour on the following morning for receiving the stranger on the important business he had announced. Sir Castleton fretted at this, but was constrained to bear it; and, by way of

passing the heavy hours, directed his steps towards the walls of the convent. The dark and gloomy building filled him with pity for those involuntary victims who sighed within, or those who, dazzled by fancied devotions, and the false descriptions of peace and happiness, given by a deluded few, too late find their error, and weep over their imprisonment.

As the Baronet's eyes roved over the building, he perceived a small door, half buried in ivy, cautiously unclosed, and a face of exquisite beauty just presented itself. Upon first catching a view of his figure, a smile of delight played round her lovely mouth. The next moment she perceived a stranger: a look of terror chased away the smile—she uttered a faint exclamation, and instantly withdrew. Sir Castleton tried to open the door—it was securely fastened; but a faint whispering convinced him that the alarmed fair one was still there, and not alone. The idea that Bertha might be one of them, and that to see her previously to his meeting with the superior might be useful both to her and himself, induced him still to hover near the

spot, though very quietly, in the hope that the door might again unclose, and give him an opportunity of ascertaining whether it was the lady he sought. He had no doubt whatever that a lover was in the case; and the idea, that two attached hearts depended for happiness on his efforts, gave him doubly the wish of effecting her liberation. He hid himself in the clustering ivy and cypress trees, which shaded this melancholy spot, till he had the satisfaction, after waiting a considerable time, to see the door again gently opened, and the beautiful novice step cautiously forth, anxiously gazing round in search of some expected object.

Fearful alike of alarming his fair neighbour, and of suffering her to depart unquestioned, he scarcely knew how to act, when other footsteps equally cautious approached, and a young and very handsome man met the searching eyes of the Baronet. Not a word, however, could be understood, except the name of Eudora; but whether that name belonged to the object before him, or to another, he could not ascertain. A short conversation ensued: a letter was given by the lady to the

gentleman, and he precipitately departed. The lady staid a moment after—then upon Montreville's rustling among the trees, retired in evident fear—and Sir Castleton saw her no more. He returned home disappointed at not having been able to converse with this lady, vainly trying to conjecture who she was, but believing that it must be either Bertha herself, or her ambassadress.

At the hour appointed he proceeded to the convent, and was ushered into the presence of the Superior, a little, lean, shrivelled, malignant looking old woman, who endeavoured, by *hauteur* and form, to supply the place of dignity. She received her guest with stately frigidity, and, waving her hand towards a chair, seemed as if she thought herself sufficiently condescending when she allowed him to sit in her presence. A few moments passed in a silent survey of each other, nor was it without difficulty that Sir Castleton forbore to smile at the self-sufficient, little, helpless body before him. At length the Abbess, in a sharp voice, desired to know who he was, and what business he could possibly have with her. Sir Castleton

made known his name, and preferred his request of being allowed to see Mademoiselle de Rosemont, that he might deliver into her own hands the letter intrusted to his care by her late father. A strange expression of indefinable malice filled her sharp grey eyes, and her smile, which distorted rather than adorned her countenance, was wholly inexplicable to the Baronet. She remained some moments silent —then, gazing earnestly at her attentive observer, said, " She, whom you seek, is not here. Bertha de Rosemont quitted this convent at her own desire, and with my permission, some days ago. The letter which you mentioned you may confide to me, and I will convey it to her."

" You know then, Madam, where she is, and can consequently direct me to her," replied Montreville. " The letter, with which I am charged, I shall deliver only to herself. I cannot, however, help thinking it rather extraordinary that she should have thus suddenly gained your permission to leave the convent, and enter a world you despise, when, only a few weeks ago, you positively prohibited such

an indulgence. As her relative, and delegated by her father, I conceive that I have a right to demand access to her wherever she may be. I am authorised so to do; and if she is not already professed, I have full authority to remove her from a situation which she thought of with horror. I beg of you, therefore, Madam, to inform me where I may see my cousin, and learn her wishes from her own mouth."

"Poor, ignorant boy," exclaimed the indignant Superior, "you will never see her! Bertha is gone from hence; and it is not, after taking pains to secure her eternal salvation, that I should again endanger it by telling you her retreat. She will never enter the vain and frivolous mazes of a tempting world, nor is she now desirous of it. A good God has opened her eyes; has removed the delusion which hoodwinked her better judgment; and she now cheerfully consents to take the veil, though not in this convent. Our conference ends here, for no other answer will ever pass these lips."

"Then, Madam, to other powers I must

appeal," said Sir Castleton. "I ask only to see this young lady—I doubt not your assertion of her changed sentiments; but having sacrificed a great deal to ascertain, in person, the actual situation of Bertha de Rosemont, I cannot go back in uncertainty. If she is indeed professed, or on the eve of being so at her own desire, I have nothing to do but to return as quickly as possible to England. If, deceived by specious arguments, or unable to cope with superior power, she should have consented to immolate all the fair prospects of youth and hope on the dreary tomb of cold devotion, whilst every wish of her heart contradicts the vows extorted from her lips, then I think myself bound to stand forth in vindication of the rights of nature, and bear her from scenes repugnant to her feelings."

"Insolent! Am I then defied?" said the Abbess. "So far from having served the cause of the girl, you have accelerated her fate. This very night shall witness her vows, and seal her irrevocable doom."

"Indeed! This very night!" said Montreville, with a smile of sarcastic meaning. "Is she

then yet so near—yet so much in your power? Pardon me, Madam, but anger has deprived reason of her power. Bertha cannot be far from hence, if such can be your means of immediate action; and we do not often speak of pleasant events as accelerating our fate, or our irrevocable doom. Upon these involuntary acknowledgments you must allow me to presume, and to act accordingly, unless you will condescend to be sincere."

The Abbess, confounded at her own unguarded lapse of speech, which certainly amounted to something very like a confession of Bertha's proximity, made no reply to Sir Castleton's last address, nor any attempt to prevent his retreat, which he effected with much less respect and politeness than when he entered. As he passed hastily down a long passage, followed at a distance by the infirm old attendant who had announced him, he was gently detained by a fair hand, which held, closely crumpled up, a small piece of paper. Montreville turned to see the owner of that fair hand; and beheld the same lovely girl, with her veil half withdrawn, whom he had

observed at the ivy door. Exquisite beauty marked every feature, and unwillingly he acknowledged her superiority even to Julia. He wished to speak; but, placing a white finger on her coral lip, she pointed expressively to the paper he yet held in his hand, and gliding down a dark arched passage withdrew, unseen by the attendant. Sir Castleton hastily placed the paper in his pocket, with no small share of curiosity as to its contents, quickly returned home, and retired to his own apartment.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE contents of the paper, which Sir Castleton held in his hand, were as follows: "Bertha is still in the convent, notwithstanding the assertions you have heard to the contrary, but closely shut up. I can, however, convey a letter to her. If I mistake not, you are the chevalier I saw at the *ivy door* last night. Be there again this evening at dusk. Should my conduct appear to you reprehensible, circumstances must excuse it, and, at a season of more leisure, I will apologize.

"EUDORA.

This billet, written in the purest French, and in a most elegant hand, together with the enchanting figure of the writer, gave Montreville a high idea of her, and he felt by no means an unwillingness to keep the appointment at the ivy door. In spite of his devoted attachment to Miss Coventry (and a

truer lover never sighed upon a midnight pillow), the exquisite form and face of Eudora floated before his imagination, "played round his head, but came not near his heart."

There was something inexplicable in the conduct of the Abbess respecting Bertha. Why had she thus solemnly denied her residence in that convent? Why assert her cheerful and voluntary compliance with the sacrifice required by bigotry, yet deem it necessary to seclude her from him; lest his arguments, of a far different tendency, should stagger her resolves, and, as he believed, expose the threats or deceitful blandishments which had imposed upon her judgment, or terrified her to compliance? He recollected how little surprize the old lady had testified upon his acknowledgment of his name and business—the obstinate pertinacity with which she adhered to her false assertions—and the unguarded passion which had afterwards betrayed that they were false. Every former doubt, every tormenting suspicion, recurred to his mind, and uncertainty clothed them in its most frightful colours. He examined with more scrutinizing

attention the countenance of Gilbert, but he could read nothing there; and even fancied that the scrutiny was returned; for the man sometimes fixed upon his master, when he believed himself unobserved, a look of singular import. Sir Castleton wished to dismiss him, but the extreme attention, and regular deportment of Gilbert, rendered it impossible to do so without the imputation of caprice. Every action of this man was respectful and attentive—he was always in his place—always ready and active; and his master felt how absurd it would be to quarrel with so excellent a servant merely because he disliked his face, and fancied—he knew not what.

Unable to determine on any regular mode of conduct in his present situation, Sir Castleton forbore to write to England, that he might not harass his friends there with doubtful communications and indefinite plans. From Eudora he expected considerable information, and he looked forward with great impatience for evening. The remainder of the day, under such circumstances, was irksome, and seemed never ending. He was unwilling to present

any of his introductory letters, though an intimate friend of Mr. Giffard's, settled at Courtray on his marriage with a Flemish lady, was amongst them, fearful lest such introduction might hereafter interfere with any business requiring secrecy and dispatch, a circumstance which seemed not at all improbable. He therefore wandered about the environs of the town; narrowly observed each avenue or tower belonging to the convent; and was more than once at the place of appointment, for the mere purpose of tracing its gloomy mazes. At length the ivy door moved on its hinges, and Eudora appeared, who, looking round with an air of enquiry, implied by a motion to Sir Castleton that she wished him to be silent, and presenting her hand, conducted him to a recess beneath the arch of a bridge, where the drooping festoons of ivy and broom concealed from observation those within.

Sir Castleton warmly thanked her for this kind condescension, and Eudora, blushing excessively, replied: "Indeed, Sir, I have need of all your candour to excuse such apparent freedom and forwardness, but I have not time to say on this subject all I wish."

Sir Castleton's reply was sufficiently polite to free Eudora from much of her uneasiness; and she proceeded immediately to the business, which induced her to venture thither. "I am," said she, "the intimate friend and confidante of Bertha, and know full well all the discomfort of her situation. I believe that no circumstances whatever would reconcile her to take the veil; and, attached as she is to a gentleman of your country, she thinks of such a measure with horror. She has written repeatedly to her father, but he either neglects her remonstrances, or, I suspect, betrays them to the Abbess, whose insatiable avarice renders her alive only to the pleasure of receiving the presents always made to the convent on the occasion of a lady becoming a nun. Two days ago Bertha was peremptorily told that she must submit to this sacrifice, or expect to be immured in an old chamber of yonder turret." Eudora pointed out a dark and dilapidated place, while sighing, she resumed her narrative: "Bertha preferred the latter alternative, and was immediately conducted to her solitary cell. I suspect that the Superior was informed

of your intended arrival, the object of your journey hither, and the power with which you are invested; for I know the old lady has been unusually anxious upon the approach of strangers, and incessantly harassing Bertha, hoping, by threats and importunities, to effect her purpose. But my friend is firm, both in her attachment to her lover, and in her opposition to usurped power; since, unless the Abbess possessed a positive mandate from Sir Charles Montreville, commanding her compliance (which she does not) she cannot enforce her cruel authority. You wonder, perhaps, how I come by this information. Sister Veronica is the confidential friend of the Abbess, and to her the old lady pours forth all her secret plans. I am a boarder here at my own pleasure, detained only by my affection for Bertha. I possess that, which in courts or convents is ever infallible; and sister Veronica cannot refuse her choicest information to a bribe of any value. She it was, who informed me this morning of your arrival, and the Superior's bold assertion of Bertha's absence from the convent, One circumstance only she keeps from her *faithful* confidante—

the means, by which she was informed of your mediation in Bertha's favor. Fortunately for my friend, her prison is directly over my sitting-room, which I chose for the beauty of the prospect it commands. I, therefore, can, by means of a cord and stone, convey any letter to and from her. Veronica informed me that you had one for her. Dare you trust me with it—and dare you aid Bertha in her escape, if she has courage enough to attempt it? The task will not be difficult."

"Most readily will I do both," replied Montreville, placing the letter in Eudora's hand. "I came at the particular desire of my uncle Sir Charles, now no more, to remove Mademoiselle de Rosemont from a situation so abhorrent; and if you really think that I have no chance of success, in a quiet way, with this inexorable Abbess, I am so desirous of concluding the business, both on Bertha's account and my own, that I must resort to the less reputable means of an elopement. Consult, therefore, Mademoiselle, with your friend, and consider me as devoted to her service. May I presume on your condescending kind-

ness, and request again to be honoured by meeting you here? If you will appoint your time, or leave any commands for me in this place, I will not fail to visit the spot repeatedly till I find them. In the mean time, if, by means of sister Veronica, you can discover from whom your Superior receives her information, with the nature and extent of such accounts, you will do me an incalculable favor. I much suspect my own servant."

"You will perceive how inadequate all I can gather must necessarily prove for your information," replied Eudora; "but what I can learn I will; and, however garbled, it may be some clue to your understanding the rest. I am sorry to give you the trouble of repairing hither at an uncertainty; but I cannot approve of introducing any servant into our confidence. At the same time, I assure you that I know nothing of your's. Some time to-morrow you shall certainly find a billet, but *when* I cannot say; for it must depend on contingencies. The only hour of communication with Bertha is by night, fearful as we are of being discovered. To-night I shall endeavour to arrange

some plan with her, and to-morrow you shall know my success. Adieu, Chevalier!"

Sir Castleton had still a thousand questions to ask, but the fear of been missed and too minutely catechised made Eudora very anxious to return. Having ascertained that the coast was quite clear, the Baronet conducted his fair coadjutor to the ivy door, and, pressing to his lips the beautiful hand he held, bade her farewel. He then sought his solitary apartment, to recal her information and—*herself*.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE Baronet was frequently at the arch on the following day, before he was rewarded by the promised note. At last he espied a packet, and, eagerly unclosing it on the spot, found the following letter from Bertha, together with a few lines from Eudora, merely appointing a meeting at the arch that evening, at the same hour as on the one preceding. Bertha's letter was as follows:

"SIR,

"Allow me to thank you very gratefully for the interest you take in my fate, and the exertions you have already made to ameliorate it. To you alone I look for assistance; and yet hope, through your kindness, to effect my escape from a situation extremely horrible to me. I am well aware of the endeavours that will be made to induce you to believe the con-

trary, and to delude you into an idea that, after all my former opposition, I at last consented to give up a world, which, I will acknowledge to you, contains every inducement love and friendship can offer for my continuance in it. Having said this, you will know exactly what degree of credit is to be given to the assertions of the Abbess. The letter, which my friend Eudora St. Abberive conveyed to me last night in my gloomy abode, gives me also the promise of an independence, which removes every shade from my future prospects, and enables me to reward the generous lover with wealth, who would have willingly given me all his. In this last act of your late uncle I recognise a parent; in every other instance——but peace be to his ashes! The dead are sacred!

"To Eudora, Sir, I commit the management of every thing concerning myself. My situation here is not indeed enviable, but I am content to remain quietly in it for a time, rather than by impatience risk an eventual failure of my hopes; certain that, with such a letter as my father's last, I may defy every

compulsatory endeavour to make me a nun. Eudora will regularly transmit to me every transaction, in which I am concerned. I have sufficient personal courage to encounter some difficulties in the way of my emancipation; and most gladly shall I make every effort towards so desirable an end. To yourself, Sir, and to Mademoiselle St. Auberive my obligations are unspeakable, my gratitude unfeigned.

"I remain, with great respect,
"your friend and cousin,
"BERTHA DE ROSEMONT."

Sir Castleton was struck with the name of St. Auberive, for it was that of a family to whom his uncle had given him an introductory letter, but which he had never before felt the slightest inclination to avail himself of. Now the case was altered; and he determined on mentioning the circumstance to Eudora in the evening, that he might learn whether it was to her family he had the power of being introduced. If such proved to be the case, he resolved immediately to profit by his letter.

He had again written a large packet ready for England; and finding that in all probability his stay at Courtray must yet be considerably prolonged, he intended to dispatch Gilbert to Ostend for the rest of his clothes, and send the packet in his charge, to be forwarded by the first conveyance to England. He, therefore, hastened to finish his letter to Julia in these words.

"You see, my Julia, how uncertain is my return to England, and how impossible it is for me to quit unfinished, with propriety at least, the business which brought me hither. How gladly shall I welcome Bertha's liberation, for it includes mine; and in conducting her to England, where her heart too is flown before her, I shall be promoting my own happiness, which can only be found in your society. I scarcely ever saw so fair a specimen of female friendship as exists between my cousin, and Eudora St. Auberive. The latter secludes, in the gloomy shades of this convent, youth, beauty, fortune, and talents, all of which she eminently possesses, for the sole

purpose of assisting and comforting her friend, she being only a boarder herself, and consequently at liberty to remove whenever she pleases. I cannot describe the exquisite beauty of Eudora's face and form, nor the angelic expression of tenderness and delicacy which speak in every feature. Were I writing to any one but my own Julia, I should be less diffuse on the charms of another; but you, my love, who know your undivided empire over my heart, and that beauty, however striking, even *yours*, Julia, is only a secondary object with me, will not grudge a few personal praises, nor fear a rival any where. I am sure you do me justice, and therefore I will not retract, or erase the commendations I have bestowed on the very lovely Eudora. Bertha, you will perceive from the foregoing part of my letter, I have not yet seen. Our first interview will, probably, be a singular one; very likely either on a rope-ladder, or in a post-chaise."

The packet finished and sealed, Gilbert was dispatched to Ostend, and Sir Castleton

began to enquire into the hour, hoping and believing that it was almost time to meet Eudora at the arch. It was, however, too early; and, attended by Selima, he walked into the fields near the town. At some distance before him he observed a man closely muffled up, and looking round, as if in search of some person. Montreville *fancied* he had the air of Bingley; but the idea was almost the next moment discarded as too ridiculous, when Selima, running after him, fawned with evident marks of recollection and pleasure. The man lifted a heavy stick, and struck at her; but the agitation of the moment rendered him awkward, and the animal escaped much injury, whilst the stranger, turning hastily down a lane, was soon out of sight.

The first idea of the Baronet was to follow him; but the disabled state of his faithful favourite, whom he would not leave to farther mischief, and the near approach of the time when Eudora would be expecting him, changed his intention, and he returned home; where, giving his lame companion to the care of his

hostess, with a particular charge to keep her within, and not part with her to *any one*, he set out for the ivy door, where Eudora had just arrived.

Eudora acknowledged that she had added very little to her former stock of information, but said that if Sir Castleton could think of any way by which Bertha could descend from her window, she would not shrink from it on account of a little danger or difficulty. He mentioned a rope-ladder; but as Eudora seemed unwilling to admit Gilbert to a conference, and Sir Castleton could hardly undertake to execute every thing in so hazardous an exploit himself, he knew not how to proceed.

" My brother," said Eudora, " would assist us—the gentleman, Chevalier, whom you saw at the ivy door with me. He is already a good deal in Bertha's confidence—if you also dare trust him, and would honor him by admitting a visit——"

" I strongly suspect that I have a letter in my pocket, which would obtain for me the notice of your family," replied Sir Castleton.

"I received one to Monsieur St. Auberive from my uncle, but whether it was intended for your father——"

"Alas, no!" answered Eudora, sighing; "I have no father—no mother! When I quit the convent, where only Bertha detains me, I shall go to an aunt at Paris. But to leave my own uninteresting concerns—It was, doubtless, to my brother that your letter was addressed; and I should be most happy if you would allow me to direct him to-morrow morning to your lodgings. Once introduced, every difficulty is over; for I think I may speak impartially, and yet speak favourably of Adrian."

"I am most readily inclined to receive every favourable impression of any one related to you, Mademoiselle—at least if they at all resemble your fair self. Most gladly shall I call, and present my introductory letter; or welcome Monsieur St. Auberive to my usual abode."

"Adrian will honor himself by calling on you in the morning, if you will oblige me with your address, Chevalier. I shall be rejoiced

at this on many accounts; and it is not the least pleasant circumstance, that it will furnish us with a more eligible and a more respectable method of conversing than this bridge. I shall give much pleasure to Bertha by this arrangement, and she will justly anticipate a willing and skilful coadjutor in my brother."

The conference ended here; and the Baronet attended Eudora to the ivy door, with increasing admiration of her beauty, as well as of her elegant manners. He returned home, not displeased at a circumstance, which promised a greater degree of intimacy between them during his enforced residence there; and, at the same time, held out a prospect of that residence being sooner exchanged for the dear abode of Castleton Manor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The introduction between Sir Castleton Montreville and Monsieur St. Auberive took place on the following morning; and the young men, mutually pleased with each other, agreed to pass the rest of the day together at St. Auberive's house, where, in the evening, Eudora met them. This acquaintance made it necessary that Sir Castleton should also seek that of Mr. Charlton, the friend of Mr. Giffard, who might afterwards hear of the letter intended for him, and the Baronet's inattention to the introduction which it contained. He accordingly sent the letter to Mr. Charlton; and this was followed by the appearance of that gentleman at Montreville's abode.

Mr. Charlton was a grave and very silent man, some years older than his friend Giffard, immersed in business, and apparently thinking of little else. His mind seemed incessantly employed in calculation; and though he at-

tended sedulously to every duty of life, was a good husband, father, and master, he seemed to consider all this as a duty *only*, unmixed with pleasure. As to friendship, he appeared to be cold about its feelings, though he performed the acts of attention, and even of kindness, which it enjoined. All esteemed—few loved him; and Sir Castleton felt immediately that *their* intimacy would never proceed further than a cold and transient acquaintance, involving a few dull visits and calls—that they should meet without pleasure, and part without regret. He never ceased to wonder what could possibly have attached such a man as Mr. Giffard (whose warm heart teemed with good-will and kindness towards his whole race, and whose every sentiment was open and liberal) to a being so close and *prudent* as this Mr. Charlton. He was equally surprised, on being introduced to his wife, at finding her a little vivacious Fleming, whose conversation was the liveliest repartee, and whose pretty mouth was always decked with smiles. Mr. Charlton's grave and austere manners seemed to have no effect on her's; and Mon-

treville thought her as attractive, as her husband was repulsive.

From the time of these introductions, Sir Castleton found his hours pass less heavily. He spent many of his mornings with Mrs. Charlton, when her calculating spouse was engaged in commercial speculations, whilst his evenings were invariably given to St. Auberive and Eudora.

However unwilling the historian and friend of this amiable young man may be to attach even the shadow of blame to his conduct, he must yet, in truth, acknowledge that the exquisite loveliness and accomplishments of Eudora St. Auberive were not wholly without their influence on his mind. Certain it is, that he bore the procrastinated liberation of Bertha with much more composure than he had once believed possible; and, without committing an *infidelity* against Julia, was, at this period, guilty of *inconstancy*. Eudora herself, but too sensible of his worth, seeing with eyes of ardent admiration the beauty of his face, the elegance of his manners, and the polished information of his mind, which she

was well calculated to appreciate—Eudora, thus enchanted, gave up her whole soul to love, and in that self-interested passion lost much of her zeal in the cause of friendship; more intent on detaining the man she adored than in emancipating her friend. To a form at once graceful and light, Eudora added a face of genuine sweetness, and regular beauty. Her dark blue eyes beamed with tenderness and sense—her full and vermeil lips opened only to express those sentiments—her complexion, delicate though not fair, and tinted with the palest rose, admirably assisted the fascination of her eyes, and varied with each varying emotion. To those personal charms she added a voice of singular sweetness, both in speaking and singing—she played scientifically, and with feeling, on several instruments—she painted correctly from nature. In those days such a combination of excellencies rendered their possessor almost a prodigy—now they are not uncommon. Sir Castleton was constrained to allow Eudora's superiority over Julia, and, for a time at least, he bowed to the pre-eminence which he acknowledged.

At length, however, he was startled at the warmth of his own sentiments towards Eudora, and found, with much astonishment and self-accusation, how much she had of late occupied his time, his thoughts, and himself, to the exclusion of every other concern. Mrs. Charlton's raillery at first gave him the alarm; and a letter from Julia, inclosed in a large packet from Mr. Giffard, awakened him to a due sense of his blamable folly. Julia's letter, full of trusting tenderness, and speaking in terms of admiration of Eudora, whose praises Montreville had blazoned, gave him many a cutting sensation of shame and regret. His feelings, as he perused Julia's letter, convinced him that he had only admired Eudora; and that his senses, not his heart, were interested. He knew, however, enough of the nature of the passions to put his greatest chance for safety in flight, and became vehemently urgent for more active measures. He had before been seized with fits of similar impatience, which had subsided before the blandishments and charms of Eudora; who made little doubt of the present commotion

yielding to the same enchantments. But here she was deceived; and found with astonishment that Sir Castleton was at length earnestly determined to proceed from intended to real exertions in an affair, which had almost slept for some time. To this also the austere Mr. Charlton urged him, though indirectly; for, calling there one evening, contrary to custom, Mr. Charlton with a grave, yet somewhat sarcastic smile, asked him when he intended to quit the fascinating Eudora for the more estimable Julia, adding, "You will find, my young friend, that the *amiable* will outlive the *dazzling*, though the latter may be the more seducing."

Montreville blushed deeply, but made no reply; and, considering afterwards more intently on this hint of the grave merchant, recollected how much mischief he might do if, by way of news, he related this more than trifling flirtation to any of his English correspondents, through whose means it might reach Miss Coventry's ear; a report, which his own lavish encomiums on Eudora might but too much corroborate. Under these cir-

cumstances, he immediately decided on more active measures; and St. Auberive, finding him really in earnest, easily arranged in three days the necessary assistance it had cost them all three weeks to neglect. This young man, who saw clearly enough Montreville's admiration of his sister, and who rightly appreciated all the advantages of such a marriage (could it be brought about), was in no haste to counteract her influence by any injudicious management on his part. As long, therefore, as the Baronet could be amused by pretended difficulties, to which Eudora's witcheries rendered him almost indifferent, St. Auberive forbore to exert himself; but the packet from England, which the Frenchman incessantly execrated as the cause of this change from supineness to action, though he knew not why, obliged him to be active also, or betray the cause he had promised to serve. He was surprised to see how little Eudora *really* seemed to repine at the near approach of Montreville's departure; for their plans were so well arranged that no doubt remained of its success, unless Bertha herself failed in the

courage required for its execution. He saw, indeed, that, in the Baronet's presence, the starting tears continually trembled in her beautiful eyes; that pensive smiles seemed painfully extorted; and that she dared hardly trust her voice, lest her emotions should betray her; but absent from him, her spirits revived, and she promoted, by every exertion in her power, the means which, by releasing Bertha, would tear him for ever from herself.

At length all was prepared—the night was fixed—and the absence of the moon, though it rendered Bertha's descent from her turret more hazardous, favored their purpose. Sir Castleton took leave of Mr. and Mrs. Charlton, though only as if previous to a short journey, from which he would soon return; then dispatching Gilbert to Ostend, as if intending to join him there, he looked forward with impatience, not quite unmixed with regret when he beheld Eudora, to the emancipating evening, which was to commence his career towards Julia and felicity.

CHAPTER XIX.

In order to avoid the suspicion of design or scheme, Sir Castleton had once or twice called on the Abbess, requesting that information which he no longer wanted, and she was determined not to give. They generally met with coldness, and parted with disgust; for she was angry at his interruption, and he indignant at her duplicity.

All things being finally prepared, and the evening of that day having arrived which was to end, perhaps for ever, the intimacy between Eudora and himself, Sir Castleton felt a sensation of melancholy, for which he blamed himself, when he reflected that it was a circumstance, which led the way to his re-union with Julia, and his return to those personal concerns, of which Mr. Giffard's letter had given an account far from satisfactory. Unintimidated by his authority, Ravenscroft had persisted in sporting in every part of the Cornwall estates, as if

he himself were the master; and when Mr. Giffard had expostulated on the impertinence of such conduct, had sneeringly assured him that the Baronet was too much the slave of a certain Mademoiselle St. Auberive to think of returning at present—a hint, which rendered Sir Castleton more than ever anxious to be in England, and which gave him considerable uneasiness. He was very desirous of discovering who had given such information to Mr. Montreville—information, which he was tacitly obliged to own was not wholly without foundation, and had, at least, the appearance of possessing some degree of truth. He thought of Gilbert—he remembered the stranger in the fields who so much resembled Bingley. He had not now, however, much time for thought; and he plunged into business to avoid it.

A dark and very dreary evening was that appointed for his journey, which was to be immediately directed towards France, his most evident route being to the nearest Flemish port for England, and consequently the one most to be avoided. As soon as opportunity favored, Monsieur St. Auberive was to assist Bertha

from her turret to Eudora's apartment, from which the descent was not difficult—a measure, which the young Frenchman's superior knowledge of intrigue and management as to rope-ladders, rendered him more alert at performing properly. When evening drew on, Sir Castleton felt a troubled sensation of pain and joy. To part from Eudora was painful, and as he beheld her tears—as he heard her vows of everlasting friendship and affection—he could not but be affected. He pressed her tenderly to his bosom, and imprinted the first kiss on her trembling lips which he had dared to give.

"I shall see you no more," said he; "but I shall never forget the fair and amiable friend who made even banishment delightful."

"Ah, how truly has one simple word declared the nature of your feelings—the different emotions which actuate your soul when thinking of Eudora, and of those dearer objects whom you are about to rejoin," replied she mournfully. "We call not that *banishment* which places us with those we love. Where could fate conduct *me* in *your* company, that I should consider as banishment? Alas, to no spot on

this habitable globe! Pardon my presumption, and do not arraign my delicacy, if, in this interview, which you have pronounced our last, I own the affection—the esteem—with which you have inspired me. I cannot, I wish not to conceal it. Ah me! Bertha, perhaps, will touch that valuable heart to me so cold, and I—I, that would die to obtain it, shall have been the most active agent in promoting her success—her happiness."

"No, Eudora," returned Montreville, not a little moved at this excess of tenderness, which from any other woman to *another* man he would severely have condemned as indelicate—"No, Eudora, rest assured that Bertha can never become to me the dear, the beloved friend I shall ever consider you; and believe also that nothing but a prior attachment to a woman, lovely and amiable even as yourself, could have counteracted the influence of your uncommon charms. But we shall meet again, Eudora; Julia will receive with delight the friend of her husband; and most gladly shall I present the two loveliest women in the world to each other."

"Will you then *promise—faithfully promise* that when next we meet you will greet me as a friend—as one not wholly indifferent? Wherever you shall again see me, will you recognize me with a smile of gladness and welcome?"

Eudora looked, and spoke in great agitation.

"Yes, on my soul," replied Sir Castleton, "I shall ever rejoice to meet with my lovely and estimable friend—ever think myself happy and honored by the recognition. And now, my sweet Eudora, let us part, since part we must. In this kiss, in my ardent prayers, receive the seal of sincere and lasting friendship, esteem, and affection. Adieu, Eudora!"

A moment Sir Castleton held her to his heart, and the next she flew from his presence. Not without a pang did he behold her angelic form for the last time—he then rushed precipitately to the convent, at a small distance from which a carriage waited.

The evening was so dark, that, unless St. Auberive had guided his steps, he would probably have gone wrong, and betrayed his purpose. As he stepped cautiously forward, he

fancied that he heard the quick, stifled breathing of some one who wished to elude discovery. The next moment Selima growled and snarled. Sir Castleton held St. Auberive's arm, and with the other hand a ribbon, which was attached to Selima's collar, lest, in passing quickly through dark passages and doors, she should be left behind. This ribbon he found was severed, and some one violently attempted to turn the dog from his side. Selima revenged her own cause, by flying at the aggressor.—Montreville guessed, from the scuffle that ensued, and her return to him (who had walked forward a few paces), that she had baffled her secret foe. He again united the ribbon, and a faint light in Eudora's apartment shewed him Bertha at the window ready to descend. The singularity of this adventure—its romantic and novel character—thus carrying off in silent darkness a woman whom he had never seen—struck him extremely, and he almost condemned it as too Quixotic. To retreat now was of course impossible had he wished it—to think, unwise.—Bertha affixed her ladder of ropes, and, throwing down a small parcel,

safely descended herself. Not a word above a whisper was uttered. St. Auberive snatched up the parcel, and taking the ribbon from Sir Castleton, ran with Selima towards the chaise, while the Baronet followed closely behind, conducting Bertha, who trembled excessively. They soon reached their carriage. St. Auberive affectionately embraced Bertha, who returned his farewel with great emotion—he threw her parcel into the vehicle—then, exchanging a quick and friendly adieu with Montreville, he saw him, after feeling if Selima were safely deposited, ascend the steps, and immediately the chaise rattled off, with all the rapidity which the darkness allowed. Sir Castleton was not surprised at the silence and agitation of his new companion, thus exposed to a situation so very far from pleasant; and being himself more inclined to silence than to conversation, after a few fruitless efforts to discourse, sunk into meditation. It was still very dark when they stopt at a miserable inn to change horses, the postilion having agreed to take them two stages. The appearance of the house hardly promised such an accommodation

as post-horses, but four very good ones were soon brought out. Bertha refused to alight, and, the horses being quickly ready, they again drove on. Morning at length beamed, and, as soon as the light admitted a recognition of objects, Sir Castleton naturally turned his eyes to his companion. She was closely enveloped in her long thick veil. At his feet lay a strange dog; and, through all the disguise of her travelling dress, her veil, and her endeavours at a longer concealment, he recognized at his side, with consternation and amazement—EUDORA!

CHAPTER XX.

Leaving Sir Castleton and the fair Eudora to solve, at their leisure, the enigma of their thus becoming so unexpectedly fellow-travellers, we must turn our attention to England, and retrace the tissue of arts, and contrivances, which thus threw them in each other's way. To understand this it is necessary to develope motives, and unveil a series of most unprecedented villainies, from the first visit, which the unsuspecting Castleton paid to his uncle at Montreville House. Sir Charles had ever looked upon his brother with envy, as possessing a legitimate heir to his name; whilst on that heir he thought with hatred and malice. The adoption of Ravenscroft Montreville, and the unjust distribution of property, to which he had urged his father, by no means satisfied this craving fiend. Yet he dared not openly express his intentions, or sentiments, of one so universally beloved as the young

Castleton. To ruin him by imperceptible and unsuspected means, under the mask of friendship, was his design, and he found a willing coadjutor in Ravenscroft, who, though he had not sense to plan, had cunning and hatred enough to effect his perseverance in any scheme to destroy his envied cousin. The evident contempt with which Castleton treated him, the distance at which he kept him, with the difference of his manner towards him and every other person, still farther inflamed the anger of Ravenscroft, and made him anxious for revenge.

To a mind like this young man's, where every passion which can disgrace our nature reigned unchecked, and where avarice had a predominant sway, the possession of the title and estates annexed, though inferior to those, which had been unjustly given to himself, became objects of intense desire, and to obtain which no exertion was too great. The fatal clause in the will of his grandfather, which gave these envied possessions to him in default of Castleton's having a legitimate heir, gave rise to plots and schemes innumerable;

and his uncle, who, though he hated both nephews, added an almost equal hatred of his brother to that which he felt for Castleton, readily entered into Ravenscroft's views, and assisted him with his superior skill in plotting and deception. To prevent Castleton's ever forming a matrimonial connection became their immediate object, and the extreme difficulty of the undertaking raised them to more than common exertion. Miss Archerly's marriage relieved them from their first alarm on this point; but scarcely had they recovered, when the news of his engagements with Miss Coventry reached them, together with an account of the preparations rapidly making at the Manor, the affection of the young couple for each other, and the pleased consent of the parents on both sides. To break off an engagement, thus sanctioned on all sides by love and duty, was a formidable undertaking, and puzzled, for a time, the base confederates. Unable to fix on any regular plan of active cruelty, they determined, with deliberate baseness, on going to the Manor suddenly, and there discovering the surest means of dividing

those, whom love was soon to have united for life. Castleton's abstracted and agitated manner on their arrival, though difficult to be accurately accounted for, convinced these men that he disliked and feared their coming; while his visit in the evening to the Abbey persuaded them that he too had a scheme in agitation against them. But this they laughed at, well aware that his ingenuous nature was ill able to counteract art like theirs, even if he could have fathomed their purpose.

The first view of the beautiful and happy Julia awoke in the sordid breast of Ravenscroft Montreville as much passion as *he* was capable of feeling—a passion, which he chose to dignify with the name of love. To part these secure and happy lovers was now, more than ever, his determination, both from the wish that he himself felt to possess Julia, and from the persuasion that a heart like Castleton's, once attached to such a woman, would not easily relinquish her image, if deprived of her, and admit another. Could he, therefore, but once separate them from each other, he felt secure of his cousin's celibacy, if not of

his own success; and to do this became the continual object of his thoughts, in which his uncle heartily united. The death of Lady Montreville interrupted their farther observations upon the lovers, but they carried with them the ground-work of that atrocious scheme, which afterwards was but too successful. Sir Charles, though he knew too little of Mr. Coventry, and was fearful of venturing too far on explanation, had ventured to hint at the superior advantages of a union with Ravenscroft Montreville, abounding, as he did, with immense wealth, and not improbably eventual heir of that title, which would be comparatively but an empty sound on the part of his cousin. Yet all this was so darkly hinted, that, had not Mr. Coventry's own opinions in some measure coincided with these insinuations, he would have been puzzled to comprehend them.

The death of Lady Montreville was a subject of rejoicing to her brutal husband; and he turned his whole attention towards those events, which were to lacerate the heart of the man she had unpardonably preferred to him-

self. On Sir Charles's return to Cornwall, he found a letter from his hitherto neglected daughter, Bertha de Rosemont, complaining in the bitterest terms of the harshness and tyranny of the Abbess, and praying, as she had frequently done before, for a small independence, that she might quit a place so hateful to her, and enter into some reputable employment, by which she might increase whatever his bounty should bestow. To live reputably was, however, far from Bertha's natural inclination. That love of intrigue, which had characterised her father's early youth, and the weak credulity of her mother, were inherent in her; and it was more to endeavour at gaining some lucrative establishment, by means of a very handsome face and dashing figure, than to sit down contented in honest employment, that she applied for release from monastic constraint. It now served the purpose of her father to acquiesce in her reiterated request; for she became a principal and necessary agent in the scenes, to which her letters gave birth. She, therefore, received a kind answer from him, together with a few hints intended to sound her natural

disposition. If she shrank from a participation in certain plans, she was to be left to pine neglected in the convent—if she met his views, and appeared competent, as well as willing to second them, a fate very different was intended as her reward. In order to ascertain this capability and inclination, of which her reply to Sir Charles's *hints* gave a very favorable idea, Ravenscroft Montreville was deputed to go himself to Courtray, and demand an interview with Bertha, Sir Charles rightly conceiving that a little explanatory conversation would facilitate the business, much more than a long and multiplied correspondence. An intimate friend of Ravenscroft, indeed the only man of his own age with whom he was at all intimately acquainted, offered to accompany him on this mission; and Morris, who was extremely intelligent, active, and insinuating, contrived to draw from his communicative companion the whole business on which he was going. The character of Mr. Morris is pretty much explained in his being the chosen friend of Ravenscroft. He had, indeed, not a jot more virtue or honesty than that young man, though

greatly his superior in understanding; and Sir Charles soon found that he might be admitted into any scheme, however nefarious, without the fear of hurting a too tender conscience; while his quick imagination, and comprehensive mind, worthy of better pursuits, would be of great value in the intricate game they were playing. Accompanied, then, by an intelligent servant, these well-matched friends proceeded to Harwich, there to embark for Flanders, believing themselves less likely to be known or questioned as to their destination at that distance, than if they had sailed from any port nearer Cornwall. A fair wind carried them across in a few hours—they landed without accident and lost no time in pursuing their route to Courtray.

CHAPTER XXI.

By means of a handsome *douceur* to the Abbess, a tolerably imperative mandate from Sir Charles, and a great deal of very gross flattery, the confederates obtained an interview and a private conference with Bertha, who met their views with all the ardour they could desire, when she found how much of her own future comfort depended on them. Some lingering scruples, the last efforts of virtuous feeling, found their way from her heart to her lips, but the sneers and derisions of her advisers soon made her ashamed of such weakness. In short, when after two or three interviews, and ascertaining accurately the extent of the fortune she was to possess as the reward of guilt, Morris assured her of his ardent affection, and unequivocally offered his hand as soon as circumstances would allow, she hesitated no longer, but discarded every other interest for that of self. Morris, fully aware of all the

Baronet wished, and comprehending most readily all which the other hesitated to explain, now fully unfolded and digested a regular plan of action, presuming upon the well-known softness and benevolence of Castleton's disposition for his falling into the snare thus artfully spread for him. Morris knew well the natural dulness and slowness of Ravenscroft's mind. Despising his capacity, and distrusting his secrecy, he kept his *friend* as much as possible in the dark, or amused him with a feigned scheme, which he changed perpetually without apology, till Ravenscroft's only half-clear intellects became completely confused. The whole was at length arranged, and the guiltless Castleton, who neither practised nor suspected deceit so deep and deadly, fell into the snare.

The death of Mr. Montreville was an advantage upon which these people had not reckoned, and removed the last obstacle in the way of their designs. That of Sir Charles, indeed, was not exactly calculated upon: nay, Ravenscroft and Morris almost dreaded lest a death-bed repentance might draw forth an avowal of the whole, and involve them in great

trouble. But no qualms of conscience, even in that awful hour, disturbed his hardened soul. He died with deceit in his heart, and a strange mixture of truth and falsehood on his lips. That Castleton at length consented to go on this fictitious errand, without again seeing Julia, was beyond their hopes, and ascertained their future triumph. Every thing, indeed, seemed singularly to work together for their advantage. The death of Mr. Montreville prevented that marriage, which would, had it then taken place, have disconcerted or destroyed the whole scheme:—the illness and death of Sir Charles drew Castleton from those scenes where he was alone secure, and exposed him the more readily to deceit, by placing him where he could not expect to find it—a death-bed. In after-times he could not help asking himself whether a good Providence could direct, or suffer such things, but the rebellious despair, which prompted the feeling, gave way to the better principles inherent in his breast. He remembered that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and humbly bowed to the power, which thought fit to afflict him.

No sooner had Sir Castleton declared his intention of fulfilling the last request of his uncle, than the confederates began to work darkly for his destruction. Ravenscroft, indeed, in whose heart avarice was a more potent passion than even revenge, began to regret he had gone so far, when he found that, by keeping Bertha still in durance, he might have pocketed eight thousand pounds; losing, in the idea of a little present gain, the advantages which Sir Castleton's probable celibacy would afford him hereafter. Morris, who had as little respect for the principles of his friend, as for his abilities, watched him narrowly, and determined to leave him out of all his calculations as much as he could; particularly where peculation was possible. This cunning Machiavel, ever present yet never seen, incessantly pursued the devoted Castleton—introduced himself under the name of *Bingley*, and feigned distress at Penzance—became the companion of his voyage—and even at Courtray, still hovered near him, an incessant spy; whilst the man whom Sir Castleton rejected, because recommended by Ravenscroft, and afterwards

actually hired, in spite of every precaution, under the name of Gilbert, was the identical servant, who had attended Morris and his friend in their secret expedition to Flanders.

The Superior, meanwhile, was as much a dupe as Sir Castleton Montreville; for as it was a part of Morris's plan that Bertha should appear forcibly to be torn from the convent, so it was equally the wish of the Abbess forcibly to detain her; she having an insatiable desire to appropriate the two thousand pounds, which Sir Charles had promised to the convent, on Bertha's assuming the veil. Effectually deceived by Veronica, who was in the entire confidence of both parties, and faithful to that which made it best worth her while, she was easily persuaded by this specious nun to conceal Bertha during Sir Castleton's stay at Courtray; for she had been taught to expect him as one, who would have full authority to remove Bertha from her power, and thus deprive her of her promised *douceur*. Bertha, with a decent show of grief and resistance, but real satisfaction, ascended the comfortable turret prepared by sister Veronica, which the in-

firmity of the Abbess, as she well knew, would preserve from inspection; whence she passed to the apartment below, occupied by her friend Eudora, just as she pleased. There she related to Eudora exactly such a history of herself, and her plans, as she thought proper; while Eudora, unsuspicious, and really attached to Bertha (of whose true character she was ignorant), readily agreed to be the messenger and manager between her and the Baronet; herself deceived whilst striving to serve others. The exquisite beauty and fascination of Eudora, upon which Bertha and her lover built so much, and which had induced them to select her instead of one more artful, was not *wholly* without effect upon Sir Castleton. Morris, who watched him unseen and unsuspected, saw that, by prolonging the time of his sojournment at Courtray, he gave fuller scope to the influence of this charming girl. To separate Montreville from Julia, to blacken his character in England, and to effect those contrivances, which were to give undeniable evidence of the whole, constituted the intention of the arch fiend Morris, who had been promised by Ravenscroft a handsome

sum if ever *he* became the husband of Julia, the end at which all his schemes pointed in the ruin of his cousin. Eudora, therefore, was an admirable agent; and her name, united with Sir Castleton's, in the way of *news*, reached not unfrequently the ears of Julia through Ravenscroft, who was now a general visitor at Ashborn Abbey, having hired a small house in Derbyshire. The warm and animated praises, which the Baronet bestowed on Eudora, were at first unheeded by Julia; but when weeks stole on—when December was nearly at an end—and still he lingered at Courtray—and still dark hints were continually meeting her ears—she could not but feel uneasy, though she endeavoured to deny, even to herself, that she was so. Mr. Giffard at length heard the same invidious reports; which, unfortunately, Mr. Charlton's letters but too much confirmed. Ignorant of any engagement with another; uninformed of the circumstances which detained Sir Castleton so long at Courtray; and observing the extreme attention paid by him to Mademoiselle St. Auberive, he naturally concluded that the Baronet was attached to her, and mentioned it, as a matter of course, to his

friend in England. But while Eudora was thus led on innocently to draw Sir Castleton into the snare spread to entrap him, her own peace became disturbed, her heart wholly and sincerely attached. The fine person and soft attentions of Montreville, which, from peculiar circumstances, were wholly her own, completely won her affections; and, when after some weeks of idle manœuvring, she learned it was necessary to the welfare and escape of Bertha that she should consent to become his companion, and that, in such an event, he would stand engaged in honor to offer her his hand; she could not resist the dear temptation offered by hope, and rendered probable by love, but agreed to what was required almost without hesitation. She wondered, indeed, why Bertha's elopement with the man, who came expressly for the purpose of her release, should militate against her happiness; but when she learned, as she then did for the first time, that the lover of Bertha was himself there for the same purpose—that Sir Castleton was averse to the connection, which he would probably take some means to break off—and that her acquiescence in a scheme, singular in

appearance but innocent in design, would lead eventually to her own happiness—she consented—and though she acknowledged that she acted weakly, she hardly allowed that she acted wrongly, when she thought of Montreville himself, as an object to be obtained by the means. She, therefore, disguised and concealed by veils and wrappers, descended the ladder of ropes provided for Bertha, and, assisted by her brother, who firmly believed that he was escorting Bertha, found herself the companion of the man whom she loved, in a strange and singular expedition; herself unknown, unsuspected, and almost fearing to be discovered. He had promised to welcome her on their next meeting with joy and gladness; but how little, when he made this promise, had he divined how and where that meeting would take place! She remembered too the acknowledgment of that prior attachment, which, when owned, had given her an agonizing pang. But all this recollection came too late—the die was cast, and her fate was no longer in her own hands. Bertha, meanwhile, had quietly descended from Eudora's apartment in the usual way, and, with great *sang-froid*, thought of

her future fate with one she had called her friend, well-knowing it would never be the scene of happiness anticipated by that friend. She and Morris left Courtray early in the morning; for, certain of not being pursued, they deemed it unnecessary to brave the dangers of darkness. Gilbert pursued, unsuspected, the route of Sir Castleton. St. Auberive, in reality, knew little of the actual state of events. He was too heedless and inconsiderate to be fully trusted; and had no idea that his sister was to play so important a part in the busy scene. Morris gave him the first information of her elopement from the English shore.

The nature and extent of this most atrocious plot now becomes evident. The unhappy Julia, already rendered suspicious by reports, which the silence of her lover latterly but too much confirmed—for of late all his letters had been intercepted, inspected, and destroyed—was unable to resist the tide of evidence, which Bertha and Morris poured into her ears with every outward demonstration of regret and compassion. Mr. Charlton's letter contained the same news, whilst St. Auberive, to whom

George Coventry wrote, confirmed it, and assured Coventry that only entire ignorance of their route prevented his pursuit of the fugitives, to insist upon the Baronet's espousing his sister, if he had not already done so. Poor Selima also became a dumb, but eloquent accuser. The reader may recollect that the ribbon, held by Sir Castleton, and attached t the dog's collar, was severed on the memorable evening of the elopement. The collar was forced from the neck of the loudly resisting Selima, at the expence of some blood from the hands of Morris, and slipped over the head of another dog, which belonged to St. Aube ve, and quietly followed Eudora. Selima was secured by a strong cord, and conveyed to England as a mute witness of his master's tergiversation, since nothing could be to Julia a greater proof of it than his thus returning her present in contumacious silence. Such were the means, pursued with unwearied and too effectual diligence, which ruined the peace, the fame, the brilliant prospects of the most amiable, the most deceived of men, and equally so the happiness of lovely Julia. Unable to bear up against so dreadful a shock, for which no pre-

paration at all adequate had been offered, she sunk into a state of misery so intense as to alarm her parents with the horrid idea of mental derangement. So strong was the chain of evidence, so conclusive were the proofs, that the warmest friends of Sir Castleton were staggered, and almost convinced. In vain was his former character opposed to such a tissue of baseness. No *motive* could be assigned for such conduct but innate hypocrisy, and wickedness. Morris and Bertha contrived to gain universal credit, whilst they affected delicately to veil those instances, in which they had individually suffered by this monster of deceit. A tale of slander is sure of a rapid propagation, and wide-spreading belief—the name of Castleton Montreville, lately so beloved and revered, was now branded with ignominy, and generally detested.

END OF VOL. I.

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